

The Rev. Vaughan Thomas
from the Author

DISCOURSES
UPON SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL
OBJECTS AND USES
OF
THE HISTORICAL SCRIPTURES
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT,
PREACHED BEFORE
THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

BY
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TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
EDWARD,
LORD BISHOP OF LLANDAFF,
THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES
ARE INSCRIBED
AS A SLIGHT TRIBUTE
OF
RESPECT, ESTEEM
AND
REGARD.

PREFACE.



VERY many Christians appear to derive much less gratification and profit, than they otherwise might, from the study of THE HISTORICAL SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, nay, they are even pained and offended by several parts of them, in consequence of certain floating misconceptions and inadequate views of their character, design, and value. The following Discourses attempt to provide some remedy for these evils. And although they were originally addressed to the University, and contain a few passages more immediately applicable to some of its members, they are not unsuited, it is hoped, to Christian readers of other classes.

The First Discourse treats of the general design of the sacred records as RELIGIOUS

HISTORIES; the four next, of their particular design and some of their leading uses, with respect either to the nature and conduct of man, or to the will and the attributes of his Maker. Thus the Second Discourse considers the gradual preparation made for the doctrines of atonement and sanctification by the demonstration which these sacred Histories afford of THE WEAKNESS AND THE SINFULNESS OF MAN: and the Third examines the strong testimony which, in the very midst of this demonstration, they bear to the extreme LOVING-KINDNESS OF GOD toward man even in his lost and unregenerate condition. The Fourth and Fifth Discourses relate to our practical conviction of the DIVINE FAITHFULNESS; and, taking into account the points of agreement and difference between the Christian and the earlier dispensations, they treat of the value and the right application of the old Historical Scriptures with reference to either branch of this great subject—the PROVIDENCE of God—and His PROMISES. In the concluding Discourse are considered those ANTICIPATIONS OF THE GOSPEL which may be discovered in the

sacred records of the Old Testament, and which throw a Christian colouring, as it were, over the Old Scriptures.

The work is not restricted to what are usually called “ the Historical Books ” of the Old Testament, as distinguished from the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophetical Books, but extends to whatever in any of these writings is in its own nature historical. Neglecting, however, all that variety of uses in detail, which are gathered from almost every separate text in holy writ, and which are continually treated of in Sermons and Commentaries, it only attempts to consider some of the *leading* objects and uses of the Historical Scriptures. In the selection of the subjects there must of course be ample room for variety of opinion. We owe it to the goodness of God, that the Old Testament is not exactly divided into distinct portions, historical, devotional, prophetical, or didactic; and in the Historical Scriptures more especially, there are occasionally blended the characters of every portion of holy writ. Some obvious topics, however, although not discussed at large in these Discourses, have

not been altogether forgotten. Thus the Second treats by implication of that “admonition” which, according to the Apostle, we are bound to derive from the “ensamples” in the sacred history. (1 Cor. x. 11.) Whilst other subjects, such as the holiness, the justice, and the placability of the Almighty, although they might have been considered in this place, may be treated to greater advantage among the leading objects of the Law of Moses, or of the law and history of the Jews together. In a word, the design has been to treat either of the peculiar uses of the Historical Scriptures, or of such as appeared upon the whole to be more appropriately discussed in connexion with these than with other parts of the sacred writings.

It unavoidably happened, in the prosecution of such considerable subjects within a limited space, that a few of the more difficult questions of theology were touched upon incidentally, and therefore briefly. The unlearned reader may perhaps meet with occasional difficulties springing from this source. But in

general he will find some brief notes, or references to popular works, which will enable him to pursue his inquiries and solve his difficulties. And in one instance, a Discourse (formerly preached before the University of Oxford) is added in the Appendix, upon the *Extent and Efficacy of the Mosaic Atonements*, which, it is hoped, may throw light upon the view of the Primitive Sacrifices opened in the Sixth of these Discourses.

More than this was not required, perhaps, in order to the practical purposes directly contemplated in the following pages. Yet if in any measure they enable the Christian reader, under the Divine blessing, to reap increased delight and improvement from the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament, they will at the same time excite in him a new or more lively interest in many other subjects of devout study. And possibly, although the work assumes throughout that these records were written by inspired men, it may contribute something towards the prevention of a serious evil with which this country has been for some time threatened, and tend to strengthen incidentally the reader's

conviction of their Canonical authority and Inspiration.

What probability there may be of these Discourses being blessed to such good purposes, it is difficult for me to estimate. But I have long been persuaded, that a treatise on this portion of Scripture is wanted; and in hazarding this assertion, I refer partly to existing opinions, and the ordinary state of knowledge respecting the Historical Scriptures, partly to the works actually extant concerning them, and generally known to English readers.

And yet I would by no means be understood to affirm, that the following pages contain much, if any thing, that might not be gathered from previous works. Modern unbelief, perhaps, can raise few objections to the sacred history, which have not been already answered and removed by Dr. Waterland, Leland, and Samuel Chandler, Bp. Conybeare, and Bp. Watson. Whilst as to the positive intention and uses of this portion of the Old Testament, not to speak of Commentaries upon the Scriptures, or occasional

illustrations of the Histories interspersed throughout the works of our Divines upon the Law and the Prophets, little or nothing actually new can be added to what may be found even in all the well-known Keys and Introductions to sacred Scripture ; in those, for instance, of Bp. Gray and Mr. Hartwell Horne, in Collyer's Sacred Interpreter, chap. ii.—xvi. or Professor Franck, *De Scopis Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, §. i.—xviii. But those who are acquainted with these writers will perceive, even from a cursory examination of the Contents of these Discourses, that their objects and mine have not been the same. Of the writings with which I am acquainted, the nearest perhaps to my present purpose are the vigorous sketches of the objects and uses of the Mosaic writings, drawn with the hand of a master in Luther's General Preface to the Books of the Old Testament, and his Discourse upon the profitable reading of the Books of Moses by Christians. (Opp. tom. iii. ed. 1583.) But these are as much too concise, as the works before referred to are too diffuse, and enter too much into detail. Not to mention, that some new light has in

fact been thrown upon the Old Testament since the publication of the earlier works at least above mentioned ; that not every position maintained in them can be approved ; and that, in truth, so rich a mine are the Old Scriptures, that something more or less deserving of attention may generally be extracted from them by every careful and independent research.

It is therefore my hope, as well as my prayer, that these Discourses may prove acceptable and useful both to the general reader, and to the younger students in divinity. But if not, I trust at least that they may hereafter, in a happier age, perhaps, not so much absorbed by transitory interests, nor indisposed to religious peace and quietness, become the occasion of drawing forth some better work less unworthy of its sacred subject.

E. H.

*Oriel College,
January 31, 1833.*

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DISCOURSE I.

GENERAL DESIGN OF THE OLD SCRIPTURE HISTORY.

2 KINGS xiv. 28.

Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

THE Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel has not been preserved. The sacred volumes which are extant under the title of the Books of Chronicles, and which supply many of the omissions in the Second Book of Samuel and in the First and Second Books of Kings, do not record the affairs of the kingdom of Israel: after the completion of the reigns of David and Solomon, they are occupied exclusively with the history of the kings of Judah. And in no other part of sacred history is the reign of Jeroboam son of Joash touched upon. Yet he was no inconsiderable prince, we may presume, who recovered Damascus for Israel out of the powerful

hands of the kings of Syria ; and his reign was extended to one and forty years, exceeding in duration that of any of the kings who preceded or followed him on the throne of Samaria. The reign of David continued during nearly the same period of time, but the history of his reign occupies the whole of the Second Book of Samuel, and all the historical portion of the First Book of Chronicles ; whilst that of Jeroboam is comprised in a single chapter, and indeed in seven brief verses of one chapter.

Now this is merely one instance out of a thousand IN THE HISTORICAL SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT which may illustrate their DESIGN—the design, that is to say, not of the sacred historians themselves, but of Him by whose gracious inspiration these portions of holy Scripture were given for our learning. Of *His* designs the writers themselves were often no doubt unconscious. Their very ignorance of His ultimate purposes might often further them ; and the *undesignedness*, as it has been termed, of many parts of sacred history, both in the New Testament and in the Old, belongs in fact to His *design* ^a.

^a See remarks (from Duchal) in Paley's Evidences, Part ii. c. 3. on the Historians of the New Testament not considering the *effect* of their statements, the *objections* that might be raised against them, &c. And in like manner the Apostles' ignorance of the

And in the instance before us it is perfectly evident, that the design of the Holy Spirit was to present us not with a civil but with a RELIGIOUS HISTORY. What is omitted shews at once what the history is not ; and what is actually recorded shews as evidently what it is. Concerning the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, his might, his wars, and his conquests, the very subjects upon which an ordinary historian would enlarge, the sacred history is only not altogether silent ; and it refers us for transactions of this kind to records which are not at present extant. Those subjects meanwhile which it stays to notice fall under the two great heads to which almost the whole of sacred history may be referred—THE WAYS AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD, and THE NATURE AND CONDUCT OF MAN. Here is the whole of the history. Jeroboam “ did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord : he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin^b : ” the usual brief but emphatic description of *the conduct of prince and people* with respect to the besetting sin of the kingdom of Israel. Again—“ he restored the

abolition of the Mosaic Economy, for some time after the commencement of the Christian religion, furthered the Divine purpose of gradually shading off the Mosaic into the Christian system.

^b Ver. 24.

coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain :” here it would seem as if the historian was about to enlarge upon the accustomed topics of ordinary history ; but not so, for he continues, “ according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath Hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter : for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven ; but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash ^c. ” This second portion of the history of this reign is clearly an account not of the wars and the prowess of the king of Israel, but *of the mercy and long-suffering of God*. And this is the whole of the history. And it evidently relates in its two portions to the ways and conduct of God and of man, the two great leading subjects of all sacred history.

This instance accordingly has been selected not for its importance, but for its clearness. But of so much consequence is it to the right understanding and proper use of the sacred Histories of the Old Testament, that their distinctive character as RELIGIOUS HISTORIES should be practically impressed upon our minds, that, obvious as this truth may

^c Ver. 25 — 27.

appear, it deserves to be illustrated by some further instances and observations. And, indeed, however obvious this truth may appear, it has been often misapprehended, and is not unfrequently misapprehended still ^d. And whilst these misapprehensions

^d Even the pious and learned Bishop Patrick, in the Preface to his Commentary, thus recommends the study of the Pentateuch. “ In which we are so particularly instructed by Moses, as by no other author, nor by all the authors that are, or have been known to be, extant in the world. For to him we owe the knowledge of the beginning of the world ; of the first parents of mankind ; the inventors of arts ; the original of nations ; the founders of kingdoms and empires ; the institution of laws ; the fountain of religious rites ; yea, of all the ancient mythology ; and, which is most considerable, the means of propagating that sense of God and of religion, which mankind brought into the world with them ; and how it came to be corrupted. . . . Whose account of the families by whom the earth was peopled after the flood is so surprisingly agreeable to all the records that remain in any language of the several nations of the earth, that it carries with it an uncontrollable evidence of his sincerity and truth, as well as of his admirable universal knowledge. For, as there is no writer that hath given us an account of so many nations and so remote as he hath done ; so he hath not satisfied himself with naming them, but acquainted us with their original ; and told us at what time, and from what place, and on what occasion, they were dispersed into far distant countries. And this with such brevity, that he hath informed us of more in one chapter than we can find in the great volumes of all other authors ; having shewn us from whom all those people descended, who are spread over the face of the earth from the Caspian and Persian sea to Hercules’ pillars (as the

have sometimes occasioned serious practical injury to the cause of religion, a right conception of the objects and uses of the sacred history of the Old Testament is on the contrary of essential service to Christian truth, and to the edification of Christians.

I. But in the first place, *with respect to the proofs* which the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament afford *of their objects and design*, let us

ancients speak); that is, all the world over. In short, whatsoever is most ancient in those countries, which are farthest from all commerce with his own, is clearly explained by Moses: whose writings therefore cannot but be highly valued by all those who will apply their minds seriously to the study of them."

We are not indeed to infer from these passages, that the writer himself confounded the indirect and very subordinate uses of the Scriptures with their great and proper uses; but they shew with what views and for what poor purposes he conceived they were likely to be studied, if studied at all, in 1694, in an age which seemed, as he says, "to take pleasure in being ignorant of the most important truths."

In our own age, however, and in our own country, we have seen an attempt to construct a merely *civil* history of the Jews out of the sacred records; and the *impression* likely to be created by this book (although its author, I am persuaded, never contemplated such a consequence) is something altogether contrary to that which would follow a well-directed study of the inspired historians.

be careful to view them from our proper position. We do not regard these sacred books as insulated works : nor yet as works whose design is to be collected from internal evidence alone. We view them, both as *believers in their sacred character*, and as *Christians*. And further, we recollect that they are *part*, and *only part*, of holy Scripture.

For the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, have not only separate, but common, objects ; and all the several portions of the Old Testament mutually throw light on one another : but the objects and design of the whole and of all the parts of the Old Testament are still better understood and appreciated by those, who can look back upon them from the elevated position which the Christian occupies. To make use of the advantages of this position, will, indeed, be still more important, when we consider some of the *particular* objects of the old Historical Scriptures : but we should not lose sight of them even in tracing the proofs of their *general* design.

It is easy to say, for instance, that the history of the kings of Israel is brief, because the historians belonged to the rival kingdom of Judah ; that the history of Abraham and the patriarchs is treated at ample length, because the writer was a Jew, and one of their own descendants ; or that the affairs of the Jewish Church and of religion eclipse

the civil history of the times, because the writer or the compiler was a priest. These easy and superficial assertions will not, it is true, by any means account for the actual state of the fact. They will not explain the phænomena of the Historical books even when considered by themselves, and apart from the other portions of the sacred volumes with which they are in reality connected. And this may often appear incidentally in the progress of these remarks. But what we are here to bear in mind is, that we have not at present any *direct* concern at all with objections of this nature. Since they virtually impugn the inspiration of these writings, the proper proofs of their *sacred* character supply the direct answer to such objections. We, on the contrary, are regarding these books as long ago admitted into the sacred canon, integral parts of that volume of Scripture which was “given by inspiration of God.” But Christ and his apostles, whilst they confirmed the authority of the elder Scriptures, gave us besides another volume of Revelation. And hence it must be our endeavour to trace the objects of the old sacred histories at once with all the reverence and humility becoming those who would examine into the design, not so much of the inspired historians, as of the Holy Spirit, and yet with all the advantage of the light reflected upon them by the Gospel.

Thus we have Historical books in the New Testament also. And *their* general design is palpable. No one can find a civil or political history in the four Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles. On the contrary, the writer who should attempt a merely political history of the Jewish people, would almost pass over in silence the great transactions recorded in these books, although they affect the highest interests, temporal and eternal, of the whole human race*. These histories then are exclusively *religious* histories, occupied altogether with the character of man and the mercy of God.

When therefore we look back from these sacred histories to others connected with them, and bearing also a sacred character, we may well expect to find them treating of the same subjects, although under different circumstances; occupied with the history of that elder church, for instance, upon which the Church of Christ is founded; or of earlier dispensations which might pave the way for the last and highest; or with such records and descriptions of human conduct and character, or such revelations of the Divine character and attributes, as would illustrate and make preparation

* Josephus, accordingly, and the author of the recent "History of the Jews," have bestowed scarcely a word upon the transactions recorded in the four Gospels and the Acts.

for the last and highest act of grace, in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ.

And this is precisely what we find in the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament. And by what they omit, and what they select, by what they treat succinctly or in full detail, their proper character and design are displayed as *religious histories*, maintaining a just connexion with the other portions of the sacred Scriptures, prophetic, devotional, or doctrinal, of the Old Testament and of the New.

I. Hence it is that the history of *the kingdom of Israel* is concisely treated, because it had apostatized from the Church of God. And what is recorded of each successive reign is principally, or almost exclusively, the fact and the extent of this apostasy, or the judgments, and mercies, and other interpositions of God, by which it might haply be checked or overcome. Hence also the reigns of Ahab and of the first Jeroboam occupy the largest space, because the one introduced the first great defection from the worship of Jehovah, and the other completed the apostasy by polluting the holy land with the worship of Baal. Concerning the rest it was almost sufficient to state, that they repressed or retained the service of Baal, or “departed not from the sins of Jeroboam

the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin.” Nearly half, mean-time, of this entire portion of sacred history is devoted to the miracles and exertions of Elijah and Elisha, the prophets appointed by the Lord to reclaim his erring people^c.

But if a concise account of the ten apostate tribes under the kings of Israel satisfied the design of sacred history, the more ample records of *the kingdom of Judah* breathe the same spirit, and display the same moral and religious character. Hence our attention is ever directed in the first instance to the state of religion; the conformity of prince and people to the law of Moses. Whether the prince “did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord,” walking in all the ways of David;

^c The history of the kings of Israel (B. C. 975—721, a space of 254 years) is recorded in 1 Kings xii. to 2 Kings xvii. inclusive, twenty-eight chapters; but of these, three entire chapters, and about one hundred and ten verses, equal to about four more chapters, belong to the history of the kings of Judah, the contemporaries of these kings of Israel. The latter therefore occupy about twenty-one chapters. Jeroboam son of Nebat occupies two of these; Ahab about three; Jehoram three, but principally mixed up with the actions of Elisha; Jehu two, devoted to the fulfilment of predictions against Ahab, and to the destruction of Baal; but nine or more are almost exclusively occupied with the miracles and acts of Elijah and Elisha, whose mission lasted for about 72 years, nearly a third of the whole duration of the separate kingdom of Israel.

and whether the high places were taken away, or “the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places;” these and similar passages are the chief and prominent notices of every reign^h. Hence again, when the omissions in the earlier histories are supplied in the Books of Chronicles, the additions make the religious design of these works even more apparent. The leprosy, for example, of Uzziah is recorded, and recorded as a judgment, in the earlier history; but in the later we find the origin, and progress, and exact character of the offence which occasioned the Divine displeasureⁱ. We are referred from the earlier history to the later for an account of the might and the wars of Jehoshaphat^k. And what do we find there? a might which was not his own, and wars in which he was defeated when he departed from the Lord, but was delivered by signal miracles when he put his whole trust in Him^l. Hence, lastly, there is frequently intermingled with the history of the several reigns, for the purposes of moral instruction, a *personal* account of the sovereign^m; and such an account, be it observed, as

^h See 1 Kings iii. 2, 3. xiv. 21—24. xv. 3, 11—15. xxii. 43. 2 Kings viii. 18, 27. xii. 2, 3, &c. 2 Chron. xii. 14. xiv. 2, &c.

ⁱ Compare 2 Kings xv. 5. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21.

^k 2 Kings xxii. 45.

^l 2 Chron. xvii.—xxi.

^m Particularly in the Books of Samuel and Kings; the Books

worldly flattery or worldly interest would never have suggested. For the faults and vices are nakedly exposed of the very heroes and favourites of the history, of those religious princes who most favoured the priesthood, and paid the most deference to the prophet; the vanity of Hezekiah, the intemperance of Solomon, the adultery of Davidⁿ.

This portion of the sacred history, when the chosen people, namely, were *under the government of their kings*, appears to deserve especial notice in a review of this kind, because it is the most likely to be confounded with ordinary civil history. The brief records, for instance, which the sacred volumes contain of *the affairs of the Jews after their return from Babylon* are an account of the restoration not so much of the people themselves, as of their temple and their national religious worship^o.

of Chronicles attending rather more to public transactions; compare the history of David in 2 Sam. and 1 Chron.

ⁿ See Miller's Bampton Lectures, Lect. iv. p. 98. Some of our Monkish historians, on the contrary, take especial care to praise those who enriched their convents, or blacken the character of Prince or Bishop who checked their encroachments. See Hist. of Rochester, p. 117, 125. Lives of Gilbert de Glanville, and Walter de Merton.

^o In the Book of Ezra, seven out of ten chapters relate to the rebuilding of the temple, and two more to the intermarriages with foreigners contrary to the Law. Of the thirteen chapters of the Book of Nehemiah, four are occupied chiefly with the account of the building the walls of Jerusalem (ii. iii. iv. vi.);

Before the period of the Jewish monarchy, again, when God by Himself and not by a regular succession of viceroys governed His people, His immediate providence is continually apparent in the history. We could scarcely construct a civil history of the Israelites under Joshua, or under the Judges. We see every where an account of the power and the faithfulness of God displayed in the fulfilment of His great promise to His people; or, on the other hand, records of the disobedience or apostasies of the people deserving and suffering signal punishments; and, again, miraculous interpositions of the mercy of God on their repentance, and these succeeded by long intervals of obedience and repose, which are also on that account passed over without comment. These things we see, and we see little besides these. And if we look still further back to the history of the Jews in their redemption from Egypt and their wandering in the wilderness, here they are throughout under the immediate guidance and government of the Almighty. His arm is laid bare. It is a history of miracles. And whoever should pretend to compose

but even this was begun and finished as a religious work, (see chaps. i. xii.); and four more chapters are exclusively occupied with the reading the Law and other religious matters, (viii. ix. x. xiii.) Not above three chapters (v. vii. xi.) have the appearance of relating to civil affairs.

a civil history of the Israelites in this period, would construct a history not so much imperfect as false. It would be another history, and not a history of the people of Israel.

It requires but little care and observation, however, to discern the same religious design and character in the history of the chosen people even under the regal government. The greater union of the tribes, and the assimilation of their forms of government to those of other nations, may indeed introduce into their annals during this period a greater resemblance to the ordinary history of other people. But the differences, as we have already seen, are various and decisive. There was this peculiarity indeed in the trial of the Jews, that, over and above their probation as individuals, they were tried *as a people*. The nation was a Church; and it was a Church rewarded and punished by temporal and external recompenses. We have accordingly the history of the people, but evidently as the history of their trial under the special government and the extraordinary providence of God. We have also, it may be observed, so much of this history, and that of several more remarkable individuals intermingled with it, as would afford a sufficient basis for devotion and instruction in the *Psalms* and the *Prophets*. The moral and religious design of the devotional and prophetic parts of

the Old Testament is indisputable ; but how frequently does this design altogether depend for its effect upon *the history* of the chosen people, or of individuals among them^p ! And even this, perhaps, although not in itself a proof of the religious design of the Historical Scriptures, (since even profane history may be cited or alluded to by an inspired writer,) may yet be considered as some confirmation of it, when these writings are at once necessary to the understanding of the Prophets and Psalms, and are component parts of the same sacred canon. And this confirmation would be greatly strengthened, if we proceeded to shew, as we easily might, the use and need of these sacred books as a basis for the doctrinal instructions of the *New Testament*. But, lastly, these Historical books have in themselves the grand characteristic of works directly seeking a religious object ; since they profess to record and reveal not only the ways of man, but the government and providence of God^q. They are, in truth, a record of Miracles, and they are continually interwoven with Prophecy ; and with the cessation of miracle and prophecy under the dis-

^p See Psalm lxxviii.

^q See, for instance, the manner in which the history of the Israelites is recapitulated and commented upon in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah.

pensation of the Law, sacred history itself is suspended, pausing to hail the fulfilment of its earlier promises, and a new and more stupendous era of miracles at the advent of the Messiah

2. After these observations upon the religious character and design of the Historical books of the Old Testament *subsequent to the Law of Moses*, or *during the period of its delivery*, we need not expatiate upon *the antecedent history*. The same character is only more apparent than before.

A prince and a lawgiver, Moses has treated the laws and the ceremonies of religion with a surprising minuteness, precision, and fulness ; but has left the details of the civil government of his people in comparative obscurity. And in the earlier history in like manner, although “ learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” and describing a period in their history of the highest political interest, he passes over it with a rapid pen, disclosing no more of the laws and civil condition of the most remarkable of the kingdoms of the world than might give consistency to his narrative, and illustrate the character and fortunes of one individual. And to the history of this individual, his brothers, and the line of their fathers for three generations, the history of a single family, he devotes four out of five portions of a work, which, up to the period when the history be-

came thus restricted to the family of Abraham, had been occupied with the creation of the world, and the history of the whole human race for above two thousand years^s. But the whole is consistent nevertheless ; and the selection of the subjects, and the mode of treating them, alike depend upon the moral and religious character of the work. Hence, for example, there was precisely the same reason for detailing in the book of Genesis the history of Abraham and his family, as there was afterwards for dwelling upon that of the chosen people, and of the tribe of Judah more especially, which chiefly adhered to the Law, and from which at length the Messiah was to spring. For the family of Abraham was also chosen ; it was the subject of a miraculous providence, brought into a peculiar covenant with the Almighty, and the depositary of his great promise to mankind. Hence the prominence given in the history to incidents in themselves sometimes minute, and sometimes even painful, but highly important in the development of human character or of the

^s In the book of Genesis, thirty-nine chapters out of fifty are devoted to Abraham and his family, during a period of 286 years; whilst 428 years from the flood to the call of Abraham occupy only five chapters ; and in six chapters is recorded the history of the whole period before the flood, a space of about 1655 years, nearly four times the preceding period, and above five times the length of that which fills thirty-nine chapters.

Divine Providence—the sale of Esau's birthright, the incest of Lot, the intemperance of Noah. Hence again, in the mode of the narration, those circumstances and those alone are brought out into light which mark the great *moral* features of the transaction. The history of the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, from the intercession of Abraham in their behalf to the flight of Lot from Zoar, presents a striking instance of the fact. But hence, above all, throughout the whole of the work, from the Creation to the Exodus, it is even less a history of the ways of man than of the providence of God. And no one can be blind to the religious design and character of the history, when not only the acts, and mercies, and promises, and signal judgments, and providential interpositions of the Almighty are continually introduced into the narrative, but all the human transactions which it records are related in their connexion with the Divine Providence.

II. To many, doubtless, enough and more than enough will appear to have been advanced, in illustration of a point so evident, as the *religious design* of the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament. And yet all that has been said will be insufficient for the correction of some of those misapprehensions

on this subject to which allusion was made in the outset of this Discourse.

1. The persecution, for instance, of Galileo, and the famous decree of the Church of Rome against the theory of the earth's motion, were they not grounded upon an assumption almost too absurd to be expressed in words—as if it had been one of the purposes of holy Scripture to teach astronomy! And yet we also have our writers still, who scarcely hesitate to assume, that sacred Scripture is to teach geology. But can we then disengage the inspired writings from these injurious fancies, by any thing which has been advanced respecting the religious objects of the sacred history? Evidently not. Since one design does not preclude another; and we have not proved that the objects of these Historical books are exclusively religious. These mistaken theories, moreover, rest in part upon other assumptions, concerning the nature of the perfection of the Scriptures, and the extent of their inspiration: and they cannot be overthrown effectually without an examination of these grave questions. For practical purposes, nevertheless, such a conviction of the *great design* of the Historical books as the preceding observations tend to establish may suffice to guard us even against these erroneous theories. For let us examine these writings again and again, and trace in every page their grand moral and religious purposes.

We shall scarcely need an argument to expose those misconceptions of the genuine perfection of holy writ. We shall feel, that the real dignity of Scripture is not consulted for by attempts to prove its verbal accuracy upon any thing so foreign from its great subject, and so infinitely beneath it, as the speculations of natural philosophy.

To assist in preventing an unnatural *opposition between human science and divine revelation* may be one of the benefits then, attending such a study of the Historical Scriptures as has been recommended. It may further tend to check another of the aberrations of piety; the mistake of those, namely, who, gladly acknowledging the religious character of these books, are too much disposed to seek from them the gratification of a *religious curiosity*. Most of the speculations concerning the origin of the primitive sacrifices, and the inquiries respecting the state of religious knowledge in the earlier ages of the world, are to us the speculations of curiosity. We know enough of the religious condition of the patriarchal ages to illustrate human conduct and Divine Providence. It was not requisite that we should know more. But the religious use of passages bearing directly upon these two great subjects (the passages, for example, which describe the food or the clothing of our first parents) is almost forgotten, amidst industrious attempts to press them into the

service of theories of very subordinate if not equivocal utility.

2. To obviate misconceptions like these, however, is but the secondary object of this Discourse. Its direct and leading purpose is not so much to correct the misapprehensions of the pious student of the Historical Scriptures, as to induce every one to study them *for pious ends*. They must be carefully distinguished from ordinary civil history, and studied of course like every other work according to their proper design and object.

Not that we may not derive from the sacred history *illustrations* of the progress of manners, arts, commerce, civilization, or of whatever else is numbered among the usual topics of civil history. Just so we gather notices and illustrations of the religious condition of men at various periods from histories which are any thing but religious. Their proper character mean-time is not forgotten. Neither must we forget that these Historical Scriptures are essentially *religious* histories. “ Though the Bible tells us it was *written to make men wise*, it addeth, *unto salvation*¹. ”

And this is a truth more especially to be borne in mind in this place and this age. In other coun-

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15. Bishop Warburton, Div. Leg. book ix. Introd. q. v.

tries of late, and even in our own, the facts of sacred history have sometimes been treated with a strange forgetfulness of their true character, and in a manner calculated to make us not only forget it likewise, but even to entertain impressions of an opposite nature in their stead. And in this and every other place of learned education, our studies and our Examinations will always tend to divert the mind from the end of religious study to the science of it ; from the proper effect of doctrines to the arguments and controversies connected with them ; from the religious uses of sacred history to the series of facts which it contains.

3. But is not this after all, it may be said, the main impediment to the diligent study of the Historical as of the other Scriptures, that they *are* regarded as religious works ? Is it not on account of this very conviction that the study is avoided as a weary task ? This, unhappily, may be so. And yet we are not to meet the evil by a denial or concealment of the truth. Prayer itself is avoided as an irksome task. What means of grace are not neglected on similar grounds ? And yet we must not seek to recommend and enforce their observance upon any other ground than the very truth. They are *privileges* with which our gracious Father indulges us, and they are *duties*, religious duties,

which he commands. The very reluctance which we feel to obey the command, and use our privileges, what does it spring from but from our corruption, and what does it prove but our extreme need of them?

And of these sacred studies we have the utmost need. How much we need them can only be shewn by a particular examination of their uses. But the fact of our great need of them may be mentioned even at the close of this brief notice of their general design. It is easy indeed to say that man is sinful, and God is good: and what can the Historical Scriptures teach us more? But this is not the way in which we shall ever understand the true character either of God or man. We do not know the theorems of the mathematician, because we can state the definitions in which they are enclosed. The tree in winter, though the leaves may lie all wrapped up within its buds, is not more unlike the same tree in the full foliage of summer, than are these barren statements of religious truth, from the same truths expanded in the living Scriptures. God has not given them to us, or preserved them to the present day, for so poor a purpose. They must be our habitual study, to be as valuable to us as He designed. They should be our daily study, not only in our chapels, but our closets. And they should be studied ac-

according to their proper character, and for their proper fruits.

Neither will this study be distasteful or irksome, or, so far as it is so, the feeling must be repressed by perseverance and prayer. But, in fact, these writings are so constructed, as to be abundantly and continually *interesting* ^u. One of the very reasons, doubtless, for the *historical* and *biographical* form of so large a portion of the sacred volumes is, that they may *interest* us. It is in this, as in ten thousand other instances, our heavenly Father has graciously annexed a pleasure to a duty. Still let us remember always, that it is to be pursued at once *as a privilege* and *as a duty*.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning ; grant that we may in such-wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

^u See Bp. Jebb's Preface to his work on " Sacred Literature."

DISCOURSE II.



PROOF OF HUMAN GUILT AND WEAKNESS, SHEWING THE
NEED OF REDEMPTION AND SANCTIFICATION.



ROMANS iii. 23, 24.

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

WE believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the last and the best of all the dispensations of religion; that it sets life and immortality before us; that the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin; that by His merits alone the gates of heaven are opened to mankind; and that the privileges of the Christian, during the period of his probation upon earth, are immeasurably superior to those of every other human being.

Believing all these truths, however, and being at the same time intimately persuaded of the power and the exceeding goodness of Almighty God, we

cannot but be surprised that the coming of the Gospel should have been so long delayed, and that even yet its success should be so partial and incomplete. Four thousand years were permitted to roll away before the light of Christianity dawned upon the world ; and even at this day, when nearly eighteen centuries have witnessed its appearance, scarcely one sixth perhaps of the inhabitants of the earth are gladdened by its presence. But the latter difficulty should be set against the former. The very obstacles which have impeded and still retard the progress of the Gospel are among the reasons for its late arrival. A lengthened *preparation* was required to secure a tolerable reception, and any thing like stability, for the Gospel of truth. The blessings of redemption and of sanctification would scarcely have been accepted, and would never have been appreciated, had not the *need* of them been first established.

It is the office of the Old Testament and of every part of it, the History, the Law, the Psalms, the Prophets, separately, and in combination, to contribute towards this necessary *preparation for the Gospel*. And, indeed, the proper use of any single portion of the sacred volume can scarcely be understood and valued justly, if it be only regarded by itself. To a certain extent, however, the separate portions have their separate uses. And

among the distinct and the leading uses of the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament, one of the most remarkable is, the part which they perform in establishing *the need both of redemption and of sanctification*, by disclosing to our view a fearful PROOF OF HUMAN GUILT AND HUMAN WEAKNESS.

I. Let us then, in the first place, examine into *the nature of this proof*; observing the terrible picture of man's misery which the Historical Scriptures disclose, and considering to what extent the whole race of man must admit the fidelity of the portrait. We may thus perceive, at one and the same time, how largely, in point of fact, these Scriptures contribute towards the proof of the necessity of redemption and sanctification, and how justly this great purpose may be numbered among their appointed uses.

1. Every attentive reader of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles has been struck by the peculiar candour with which they disclose the weaknesses and faults even of the most eminent among the disciples. But whatever important purposes this openness may serve, by displaying the integrity of the writers, for example, or illustrating by contrast the spotless purity and excellence of

our Lord himself, it appears at least perfectly natural and unforced. The writers do not travel out of their way to relate St. Peter's denial of his Master, or the dissension between St. Paul and Barnabas.

In the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament, on the other hand, to describe the sins and failings of *individuals*, and even *the most eminent individuals*, would seem to be among the direct and leading *purposes* of the writers. We appear to be reading an account, for example, of a war between the people of Israel and the Ammonites ; on a sudden the history is interrupted, and a painful and afflicting story is introduced, breaking the thread of the narrative, and not in the slightest degree affecting the fortunes of the war, but treated at much greater length and with much more minuteness than the war itself, its occasion, circumstances, and consequences^a. And what is the effect of this story thus strangely introduced, but to attach something like discredit to the birth of one of the Jewish monarchs, and to stain the character of another with the accumulated guilt of adultery and murder? And yet Solomon threw the brightest glory round the state and the religion of Israel in the sight of his own and all succeeding ages ; and David, the im-

^a 2 Samuel x. xi. xii.

mediate subject of so much reproach, was the very delight of his subjects, of the people, and the army, the priest, and the prophet ; and was indeed, if any one was, the hero and favourite of the Jewish history.

But this is only one of numerous examples of the same kind. The sacred history of the Old Testament, in a word, stands distinguished, as it has been well observed, from all other history by this peculiarity^b. It is characterized by this studious endeavour to disclose the imperfections of men, upon whose virtues the historians might rather by every tie of gratitude, or interest, or filial veneration, have been disposed to dwell. Nay, and they do delight to dwell upon their virtues. It is from these histories alone that we have learned to admire or revere the characters of Hezekiah, or David, or Noah, or Abraham. And nevertheless, the sacred historians studiously direct our attention to the failings of men like these. And in many instances they describe the offences of these, and various other individuals, with a minuteness and fidelity absolutely painful and revolting to those who are not aware of the purpose of the history ; painful indeed to those who know this purpose best,

^b See Miller's Bampton Lectures, Lect. iv. p. 95.

and discover in it the designed and humiliating record of *the depravity of man*.

But the depravity of man is not the only fact we learn from this selection and exact delineation of the faults of individuals. *Human weakness* is displayed at the same time. For we should not only remark the great *variety* of failings recorded in the Historical books of the Old Testament, and those the failings very frequently of the best men ; “ Abraham, for example, falling by timidity, Moses by self-complacency, Job by presumption, David by uncleanness, Solomon by intemperance, Hezekiah by vanity^c ;” but also we should observe the fall of eminent men by defect of those very qualities for which they were eminent. Thus Abraham fell by timidity, and distrust of the protection of the Almighty, although he had experienced and acknowledged that protection again and again, and his very characteristic was faith. And who so distinguished as David for courage and chivalrous generosity, or so constant in ascribing all his success to the Lord ? and yet he it was who would take the numbers of his people, in spite of the remonstrances of the irreligious Joab ; and he it was also who united perfidy and meanness with cruelty and injustice, in the murder of Uriah^d.

^c Seventeen Sermons by E. G. Marsh, p. 244.

^d 2 Sam. x.—xii. xxiv. 1—4. 1 Chron. xxi.

Thus were human weakness and human guilt displayed together, and but too many proofs collected of the *need* both of redemption and of sanctification.

2. And yet after all, these particulars, however numerous and however afflicting, constitute but a small portion of the entire proof.

For the Old Testament history is so constructed as not only to shew human weakness and human guilt by a striking detail of *individual instances*, but to display them in *large masses*: to display them in the records of *families*, of *nations*, of *the whole human race*; and not only so, but to unfold the conduct of men not as naked facts, but *under various circumstances*, and *distinct modes of trial*, amidst *mercies*, after *judgments*, and under peculiar *advantages*.

Thus to glance rapidly over this ample field—the scene opens with *the fall* of our first parents. It is difficult, indeed, so to place ourselves in their situation as to understand their trial exactly. But they knew something assuredly of the marvels of creation; they had happiness both around them, and in prospect; and they had intercourse with their great Creator. Yet how easily were they moved from their seat of innocence! And we may judge of the extent of their weakness by its humili-

ating circumstances and its fatal effects. Exiled from Paradise, however, mankind were not deserted. They had visible tokens, it is probable, of the residence of God among them^c; it is certain they were permitted to hold occasional intercourse with Him. And it was in sullen opposition to express remonstrances from heaven that the first-born of men became *the murderer of his brother*. To stop infection, and check the progress of sin, a separation was next established between the race of Seth and that of Cain. But the caution was slighted, the barrier overleaped, and all the descendants of Adam united together in one great and universal apostasy from truth and godliness, until the earth “was filled with violence,” and “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;” and the whole race of man, save only eight persons, was cut off by the great and terrible judgment of *the flood*.

Here then is the second grand period in the moral history of man. Now we know that the flood was preeminently a *judgment*; that it did not take place without express prediction and express warning, addressed both to the ear and to the eye; that the period when the new world of men was cradled in the ark was too long as well as too terrible to be forgotten by them; and that the great catastrophe

^c See *Miscellanea Sacra*, vol. iii. and Faber on the Three Dispensations, vol. i. p. 8. on the probability of a Shechinah before the Flood.

itself, as it left physical traces which remain to this very day, so also it was not for a very considerable period effaced from the recollection of the various nations of mankind, whether acquainted or not with the sacred records. And these things ought to affect our judgment both of the world which perished, and of the guilt of the first and the succeeding generations after this awful visitation.

Yet the first generation did not pass away without the evidence of great moral obliquity in the *son and grandson of Noah* himself: and in a few short years commenced *a new and general apostasy*. And as the old race fell by infidelity, slighting or distrusting the Divine threatenings and cautions, so did the new fall by superstition, multiplying to themselves a host of imaginary divinities. For we can scarcely doubt that the offence *at Babel* was the worship of the host of heaven^f; and we may surely regard the division of tongues as a new judgment. Yet, whether it was a judgment or only a check, its impression was speedily effaced. And in a few years more, the moral history of the world presents itself to our view under two distinct aspects, the record of the different trials of two separate portions of the human race;—on the one hand, the patriarchal churches left to wander at large

^f See Graves's Lectures on the Four last Books of the Pentateuch, Part ii. Lect. 1.

under the guidance chiefly of reason and conscience; on the other, the chosen family and chosen people separated and set apart from the rest of the nations under the special and miraculous providence of God. And what was the history of either portion of mankind? The history of the latter, the chosen race, was that of men trained at length indeed, but slowly and most reluctantly, to be the depositaries of true religion in the first instance, and in the sequel its propagators; whilst we observe the former, the patriarchal churches, gradually declining more and more from true religion and virtue, in spite of conscience, and reason, and primeval tradition, and some awful visitations of Divine Providence, (as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the fearful punishments of Egypt, and the final overthrow of the Canaanites,) until at length they were abandoned by their Maker to the miserable dominion of their own guilty and depraved imaginations^g.

3. ^hAnd yet, notwithstanding all these things, it might be said the trial of mankind was incomplete: incomplete not merely in time and in extent, in

^g Rom. i.

^h In this section, and probably in many other parts of this Discourse, I am greatly indebted to my recollection of a Sermon preached before the University of Oxford by the present Bishop of Llandaff upon Gal. iii. 24.

which respects it will not be completed until all mankind shall have been tried as Christians ; but incomplete in its nature and mode as a trial preparatory to the Christian system, and designed to prove the need of Christianity by establishing the weakness and the sinfulness of man. For reason might be an unsafe guide ; conscience is only a guide at all so far as it is enlightened ; the voice of primitive tradition would soon die away ; occasional judgments would be after a while forgotten where they occurred, and might be elsewhere unknown ; and even a long-continued chain of special and miraculous interpositions of Providence might be misinterpreted or ineffectual, unless accompanied by a *positive and written law* as a constant monitor, and unerring guide. St. Paul puts this matter in the strongest light ; “ by the law,” he says, “ is the knowledge of sin :” “ I had not known sin but by the lawⁱ.” Not that he would deny the obligation or the use of that unwritten law of reason and conscience, which the Gentile world had received and had disobeyed. On this subject he is clear and strong in the proper place^k. But, speaking by contrast and comparison of the great superiority of a written and positive law, he says, “ I had not known sin but by the law.”

ⁱ Rom. iii. 20. vii. 7.

^k See Rom. i. 18—21, 32. ii. 14, 15.

By this trial, accordingly, a portion of mankind was proved. This great advantage was afforded them. And let us hear the same apostle describing the weakness of man, and the guilt of man acting under all the advantages of a written law, clear and definite, “holy and just and good.” “I delight,” he says, speaking in the character of a Jew under the law¹, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members”—“the law is spiritual ; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not ; for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I”—“the good that I would, I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I do^m.” Nay, the law of holiness became “the law of sin and death.” “Sin, taking occasion by the commandment,” he says, “wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once : but when

¹ That St. Paul is here speaking not of *himself*, but in the character of a Jew under the law, will be apparent to those who will read and compare in the original the latter part of Rom. vii. and the beginning of chap. viii. To interpret these passages as if the apostle were speaking of himself, has been justly called a very effectual method of preaching practical Antinomianism.

^m Rom. vii. 14—25.

the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death^a.” Thus the apostle states the natural conflict between the holiness of the law and the weakness of man. And thus, again, he cites the testimony of Scripture in proof of the actual guilt of those who lived under the advantage of the law. “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.” “Now we know,” he concludes, “that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God^b.”

Against this sweeping and humiliating conclusion the Jew would be most desirous to appeal. Proud

^a Rom. viii. 2. vii. 7—13.

^b Rom. iii. 9—20. Compare Ps. xiv. 1—3. liii. 1. v. 9. Jer. v. 6. Ps. cxl. 3. x. 7. Prov. i. 16. Isa. lix. 78. Ps. xxxvi. 1.

of his privileges, exulting in his superiority above the rest of the nations, and in the fond conceit of the exclusive favour of heaven, he was slow to admit that no man deserved the favour of God ; that in his very superiority above the Gentiles he was but an instrument in the hand of Providence to convict all the world of sin ; that it was the very design of his law “ that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful^p ;” and that the greater his privileges, so much the more closely was the conclusion of the apostle rivetted. But it was as idle to question the application of some of the apostle’s citations from the Psalms and the Prophets, as it was vain to dispute the truth and validity of his conclusion ; and for this plain reason, that it was confirmed by the full and explicit testimony of the *Jewish Historical Scriptures*.

Far the greater portion of the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament is devoted to the history of the chosen people, after that the written oracles of God had been committed to them. And it is a record of their disobedience personal and national.

And here it must be particularly remembered, that among other great and important purposes of the Mosaic Law, this design also of making the offences of the Israelites *national*, was answered by their religious code being made to so very remark-

^p Rom. vii. 13.

able an extent a code of *external religious rites* and of *national worship*. The moral law indeed was copious and exact, but this belongs chiefly to individuals ; and the obedience or disobedience of men as individuals could not usually be recorded upon a great scale. But over and above the moral law, and **in** addition to those parts of the ceremonial law which related chiefly to individuals, even the political law of the Israelites was made a part of their religious code ; their civil polity belonged to their religion ; the state itself was a church. And, further, the greater part of the ceremonial law related not to the religious rites and observances of individuals, but to the worship of the nation as a nation. The daily, weekly, monthly, annual, sacrifices, for example, were all of them the services of the state, offered up not *by* the people, but *for* them. Hence, what at first sight appears to belong to the civil history of the Israelites, is in reality the record of their religious conduct ; of their observance or non-observance of the national religious worship ; of their loyalty or their disobedience to Him who was at once their God and their King. And hence also, even when they had grown into a considerable kingdom, or when they had divided themselves into the separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel, it was still possible within the compass of these sacred records to comprise a clear and comprehensive view

of the obedience or the disobedience of the people to their law⁹. On the other hand, it should also be observed, that the law had been committed to them when they were not so numerous, but that the whole people and every individual among them might become personal witnesses of all those mighty wonders, which established at once its truth and its importance. Of their redemption from Egypt, the passage of the Red sea, the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, the terrors of Sinai, the accumulated miracles, and chastisements, and judgments of the wilderness, all compressed into the brief period of forty years—and again, of the passage of the Jordan, the fall of Jericho, the miracles of Gibeon and Ajalon—of all these things in every instance had the whole congregation of Israel been actual witnesses, at the time when each of these signal events occurred ; and of several or most of these miracles had those very individuals been witnesses, who entered personally into covenant with their God and King either in the wilderness or at Shechem.

In a word, to recapitulate some of these particulars, as the Israelites never to the last became so numerous a people but that their national conduct might be without difficulty observed and recorded—

⁹ See Graves's Lectures, Part II. Lect. i. (vol. i. p. 214. ed. 2d.) and some valuable extracts in the note from Rev. Newcome Cappe's "Idea of Judaism, and its peculiar End and Object."

and, again, as they never, probably, were so numerous even from the Exodus to the Captivity at Babylon, but that the warnings and reproofs of the prophets might reach the ears of every family in Judah or in Israel—and as, without doubt, the extraordinary Providence which attended them, although never strictly equal, was always evident and palpable, always sufficient to shew them clearly that their national calamities were national judgments, and that to the immediate favour or displeasure of God they must ascribe either their adversity or their prosperity—so likewise must it be recollected, that at the first delivery of the Law, and at the entrance into the promised land, their numbers and their situation were such as to permit every individual among them to enter into a personal covenant of obedience to the Law, whilst every individual also had been an eye and ear-witness of divine mercies and divine judgments the most signal, with only one exception, that the world has known.

And none of these circumstances must pass unobserved, if we would estimate correctly not only the guilt, but the various *aggravations* of the guilt of that portion of the human race, who, partly for their own instruction, but much more for ours, were tried under the peculiar advantage of a written and positive law.

It was thus at length that the preparatory trial

of mankind was completed. And the whole human race, as well Gentile as Jew, with a written law or without one, was “concluded under sin^r.” “All the world was become guilty before God^s.” The proof of the need of redemption and sanctification, so far as it can be derived from the record of human weakness and human guilt, was completed. “All had sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” and could only be “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus^t.”

II. Upon the whole, then, we may safely rest in the twofold conclusion: first, that the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament do *in point of fact* supply a large and important portion of *the proof of the need of redemption and sanctification*, by displaying *the weakness and the guilt of men*, as individuals, as families and nations, under various trials and advantages, but especially under the advantage of a positive and written Law; and, secondly, that to discharge this sad office was one of *the leading purposes* of these sacred records.

1. But, if this be so, why that surprise which is occasionally expressed, because these Scriptures

^r Gal. iii. 22.

^s Rom. iii. 19.

^t Rom. iii. 9, 23, 24.

record offences without censuring them? These writings never stood alone. They were never otherwise than a *part* of the sacred Scriptures. Those who possessed these records had always at hand, in aid of reason and the moral sense, the advantage of other parts of revelation, the Law at first, and the Prophets afterwards, whose more especial province it was to furnish "reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness;" and these might sufficiently teach men how to censure what the Histories, in conformity with their appointed purpose, simply recorded.

Again, to advert once more to that feeling of repugnance and disgust sometimes excited by these undisguised narratives of guilt^u, this is a feeling which will die away in the mind of the serious believer, who understands the appointed uses of these faithful histories. Painful, afflicting, humiliating, he will find them still; and so they were designed to be: yet this also he will observe, that naked and undisguised as these sad histories may be, they will not, like some profane descriptions of vice, be tempting or seductive; neither will they, like some pious but exaggerated accounts of human sinfulness, go too far^x. They describe human nature as it is;

^u See Miller's Bampton Lectures, Lect iv. p. 98. and Lect. v. p. 118. et seq.

^x "The Bible does not exhibit an *unmixed* image of evil; if it

not absolutely and altogether vile, yet very weak and very sinful, fearfully needing the atonement of Christ and the sanctification of His Spirit.

2. And never let it be imagined that the use of these sacred histories has expired. They were wanted, indeed, in the first instance, like the great preacher of repentance, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord^y,” to incline the hearts of a chosen band of Disciples, Evangelists, and Martyrs, to receive, attest, and propagate, the humiliating doctrines of the cross. But they have been preserved and handed down even to us by the good providence of Almighty God for more extended purposes of usefulness. Many a stubborn heart even now rebels against the goodness of God and resists his mercy, too proud to acknowledge its own weakness and depravity, to accept the free grace of the Gospel, to confess man’s absolute need both of restoration to the favour of his offended Maker, and of the continual supply of spiritual aid to enable him even for one single moment to serve his Maker acceptably^z. And the Historical Scriptures are

did, it would not be that exact resemblance, which we maintain it is, of the character of man.” Miller’s Bampton Lect. v. p. 112.

^y Luke i. 17.

^z See Bishop Copleston on Necessity and Predestination, Disc. iv. p. 153, et seq.

peculiarly needed, in addition to the voice of conscience, and of all other history and experience, past or present, to convince these proud spirits of sin and weakness, and persuade them to be saved. But very many more must resort continually to the same Scriptures, not that they may accept the doctrines of the cross, but that they may value them, and act upon them. Comparatively speaking, they are few, perhaps, who absolutely reject the Gospel through pride. But, when we have embraced it, vanity and pride in a thousand different shapes can interpose to relax our Christian exertions, check our progress in holiness, impair our gratitude and love to God. Let us but look around us, and by their very dress, and eye, and voice, and gait, we can discover men's vanity or pride—the pride of birth, the pride of station, the pride of wealth, the pride of office, the pride of intellect, the pride of acquirements—nay, and we see men so miserably weak, as to be vain and proud even of their personal strength or personal beauty, of their very dress—nay, and so strangely perverse as to be proud of their vices, or proud of their virtues, proud of their imaginary progress in humility itself. And truly some of these species of vanity are sufficiently contemptible even in the eyes of man: but what is every one of them in the sight of God? Or is there, in fact, a single instance of vanity or pride which does not

betray our propensity to consult the opinion of man rather than the favour of God? And every instance of pride implies forgetfulness, be it more or be it less, some forgetfulness it implies of the real nature of man, and his relations to Almighty God. The devout and habitual study of those Scriptures which God has given us is, under grace, one of the best correctives of the evil. It will make us humble, and make us grateful. It will at length—for to repress self-confidence, and overcome pride, is not the work of a day or of a year, but with many or most of us the very business of our lives—it will at length make us know and feel habitually what we are, and what God is; what we are by nature, and what He would have us become through grace. And, let us not be deceived, no other study of the Scriptures will accomplish this, but that which is both devout and habitual. And these Historical Scriptures in particular, the Historical books of the Old Testament, we must habitually study according to their design, even *as* the painful but faithful records of human guilt and human weakness, that we may know and feel the mercy of the atonement, and the need of spiritual aid; that we may habitually know and feel by what unmerited and infinite mercy we have been reconciled to God by the sacrifice of His Son; and, again, to what great extent and how plainly too, (unless, indeed, which may a gracious

God forbid ! we are deluded by the vain and unscriptural imagination that not only the *condition*, but the very *nature* of the regenerate man is changed by his justification)—how plainly we stand in daily, hourly, continual need of the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISCOURSE III.

THE DIVINE GOODNESS TOWARDS SINFUL MAN BEFORE
REDEMPTION.

ISAIAH lxiii. 7.

I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

THE Scriptures in general, and the Historical Scriptures in particular, having RELIGION for their subject, are occupied consequently in the discharge of a twofold office. They must illustrate *the attributes of God*, and also *the nature and conduct of man*.

But one part of a twofold subject may easily obscure the other. And this will hold of the Scriptures in the hands of careless readers, more perhaps than of many other writings: partly from their general structure, which is evidently not designed

to reward a partial or a slovenly study of their all-important contents ; and more particularly from the frequent adoption of a very peculiar method of instruction, in the continual contrast, namely, of opposed and apparently contradictory passages^a. Hence some of the common errors of careless students concerning the divine and human natures of Christ ; the free agency of man and the influence of Divine grace ; and other twofold subjects. And hence the danger to which we are exposed of losing sight of the exceeding CONDESCENSION AND LOVING-KINDNESS OF OUR MAKER, amidst the dismal contemplation of THE SINFULNESS OF HIS CREATURES.

But, indeed, the devout as well as the careless reader is exposed to this danger. The more we know of ourselves, and the more we know of Scripture, of that appalling picture which revelation draws of sin and weakness, and of that awful sacrifice for sin which the Old Testament foreshadows and the New discloses, so much the more vile and miserable will human nature appear. And if the mind be permitted to be absorbed by contemplations of this kind, they may engender feelings injurious to

^a See Archbishop Whately's "Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul," Essay vii. §. 4. p. 216. on apparent contradictions ; which are not, he justly contends, "to be regarded merely in the light of *difficulties*, but rather as belonging to the mode of *instruction* employed in Scripture."

piety and true religion ; checking exertion, producing a kind of recklessness, making us loathe human nature itself, and conspiring with various other causes to make us blind to the tender and unceasing interest of our Heavenly Father, in a world fallen, corrupt, and lost. There are expressions in the writings even of our own judicious and scriptural reformers, which convey exaggerated and unscriptural ideas of the corruption of fallen man^b. And these expressions, unfortunately, are selected, cited, and applauded by some modern teachers. Nay, perhaps, a slight tinge of the same colouring is sometimes thrown over the familiar language of theologians, who are entirely free from all exaggerated conceptions of human corruption. Thus whereas the New Testament invariably speaks of sinful man being “reconciled to God,” divines are wont to speak of “God reconciled to man ;” as if the melancholy fact, that mankind have been alienated from their Maker, necessarily implied that their Heavenly Father was alienated from His sinful creatures^c.

^b See Homilies for the Nativity, and Whit-Sunday, p. 338, 390, edit. Oxon. 1814 ; and see Bishop Jebb's Tract on the authority of the Homilies in our own times ; and Bishop Sumner on the Corruption of Human Nature, “Apostolical Preaching,” ch. iii.

^c See note by Allen, “Translation of Outram on Sacrifice,” p. 375.

But if in the study of the New Testament itself, our attention may by possibility be diverted from the thought of His overflowing goodness, how much greater the danger of a similar result from any partial study of the Old Scriptures ! Since the New Testament is preeminently the record of the loving-kindness of God ; whereas it is among the signal and leading purposes of the Old Scriptures to prove the need of redemption and sanctification by a full and fearful delineation of the weakness and sinfulness of man. And such a result has accordingly taken place.—Not that it has actually been forgotten by divines that it was because “ God *loved the world*, that he gave his only-begotten Son” to redeem the world^d; or that the very principle of our love towards Him is, that “ *He loved us* ^e ;” not, in a word, that there is, in this age at least, any doctrinal heresy on these subjects. But there may be much practical error, without any distinct error in doctrine ; and the mistakes which pervade the familiar language and feelings of men, or may be detected in popular books of devotion or instruction, are in reality of a more formidable character than the errors of divines^f. Popular works are no

^d John iii. 16.

^e 1 John iv. 9, 10. iii. 16. Rom. v. 8—10.

^f “ You must learn to contemplate God in the only glass in which He is exhibited as a God of love—in the face of Jesus

mean test of the popular language, sentiments, and practice ; and upon this testimony it may be stated, that there does prevail in many minds some confusion of thought on these subjects, practically detrimental to sound religion ; as if the sinfulness of man blotted out for a time the loving-kindness of God ; as if the records of human sin and weakness were not also the living monuments of the Divine goodness ; as if fallen man, before he was restored to the favour of his Maker, was not still an object of His care and interest ; as if the New Testament were a record of the Divine love, the Old Testa-

Christ. (2 Cor. iv. 6. cf. John xiv. 6.)” Bridge’s Exposition of Psalm cxix. 76. I cite this passage merely to illustrate my meaning, and not at all with the view of censuring the pious author, who is so far from disparaging the Old Scriptures, that he is usually disposed, perhaps, to find too much of the New Testament in the Old. Most of my readers will have met with similar sentiments in many other places. The late Dr. Phelan, in one of his Donnellan Lectures, has even said, “the Patriarchal and the Jewish systems, by inculcating with uncompromising earnestness the infinity, the impassiveness, and the unapproachable majesty of the Godhead, crushed and overwhelmed man’s natural faculties and affections.” To such an extent may a writer be carried, by the habit of contrasting the mercies of the Gospel with the awfulness of the earlier dispensations : yet in the same work, a little before, we find a very beautiful passage upon the loving-kindness of God towards the Gentile world according to the discourse of St. Paul at Athens. (Acts xvii. 23—30.) Lect. ii. p. 47, 48.

ment only of the anger, and displeasure, and severity of the Almighty; as if, in some sense, the Redeemer chiefly were the object of our love, the Creator of our fear and dread.

Now if any thing of this kind be true, it is no light evil. It would be a serious evil, if it only deterred men from the devout study of the Old Testament, or gave them a distaste for it. But this is by no means the whole of the mischief. Religion is essentially the service of man to God; and whatever is calculated to give erroneous impressions of the character of God, tends consequently to impair or undermine religion itself. It may be far from useless, therefore, to shew by some detailed examination of the fact, that although the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament are designedly so constructed, as to display in all their enormity the weakness and sinfulness of man, yet they are at the same time designed to exhibit in a very marked and prominent manner *the gracious, tender, and unceasing interest* which God has ever taken in His creatures, even in His corrupt and fallen creatures.

I. Let us call to mind then, in the first place, a few particulars to this effect, in the Scriptural account of nations or individuals.

1. With the exception of the history of David,

the personal history of *Abraham* occupies a larger space in the Old Testament than that of any other individual. And none can be more deserving of attention, on account of the beautiful display which it affords of God's tender and fatherly care. It should be studied expressly on this account. It will not then appear to relate a mere succession of prophetic revelations and miraculous interpositions, without a reason or a plan, with no plan or reason at least discernible by us. The revelations, on the contrary, will be seen to have been vouchsafed both in an orderly series^c, and with a gracious *adaptation to Abraham's circumstances or state of mind*; and the miraculous interpositions will be also discovered to have taken place *in time of need*, in time of danger or anxiety, of danger real or only apprehended; in either case attesting the condescension and fatherly care of the Almighty.

The Lord, for example, calls upon Abraham, "after that Lot was separated from him," to look from his place "northward and southward, eastward and westward," and to "arise and walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it," for all that land would the Lord give to him and to his posterity^b. Why this declaration,

^c See Lord Barrington's *Miscellanea Sacra*, vol. iii.

^b Gen. xiii.

direction, and promise to Abraham, “ *after that Lot was separated from him ?*” We may reasonably presume, because the season of separation from his kinsman would be that in which Abraham especially needed a declaration of support ; and in which the promise (the temporal promise, to which this particular revelation was restricted) would become peculiar to him and his posterity, to the exclusion of the family of his nephew, who had originally been led with him into the land of promise. Again ; “ *after these things,*” that is to say, after Abraham’s signal victory over the four confederate kings, “ *the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram : I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great rewardⁱ.*” “ *Fear not, Abram ; I am thy shield ;*” in these gracious words the Patriarch might well confide implicitly, assured by his continued preservation throughout his wanderings, and by his late astonishing success : but this was also the precise occasion in which he might be the best disposed to learn a more difficult lesson, and believe that the Lord, how tardy soever the fulfilment of His promises, would be his “ *exceeding great reward.*” Yet what should his reward be, seeing that he was still childless, and “ *one born in his house was his heir^k ?*” The Almighty con-

ⁱ Gen. xv. 1. et seq.

^k Ver. 2, 3.

descends to the natural weakness of His servant, brings him forth abroad, and bids him survey the stars of heaven, which his posterity should rival in number. Nor was all this gracious condescension in vain. Abram “believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness¹.” And yet, it appears, his soul required some further assurance: “Lord God,” he said, “whereby shall I know that I shall inherit the land?” And again the same tender condescension to his infirmity is manifested; and another vision is vouchsafed, attended with such awful and impressive circumstances, and by an express covenant, and by such a full and explicit detail of prediction concerning himself, and the fortunes of his posterity, and the judgments upon their oppressors and upon the Canaanites, as were eminently calculated to excite and confirm that trust and hope, that faith, which is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

The history itself should be examined in detail, in order that we may observe the extent of these instances of tenderness; and ascertain that these are only examples of that considerate and patient condescension, which is the characteristic of the intercourse of the Almighty with the father of the faithful. Similar examples will be found during the

¹ Ver. 5, 6.

Patriarch's sojourn in Egypt and in Gerar ; in his intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah ; and in the merciful interposition of a promise of blessing upon Ishmael, in the midst of Abraham's grievous distress on the separation from his son^m. But in all the subsequent history, throughout the book of Genesis, of God's dealings with individuals, will similar examples be found of His considerate tenderness towards them in the seasons of their doubt, perplexity, or alarm. To this class belong the succour and the prediction vouchsafed to Hagar in the seasons of her deepest despondency ; the renewal of the covenant with Isaac in time of famine and distress, when he was disposed to fly from the land of Canaan ; the explicit promises of protection to Jacob, when his need of them was the most urgent, as at his flight from Canaan, his return to it, his meeting with his brother, his going down into the land of Egyptⁿ.

2. The sacred history thenceforward expands from the history of individuals and of families, to the records of *a people*. But still it presents the same continued traces of a gracious Providence adapting itself with parental tenderness to their

^m Gen. xii. xx. xviii. xxi.

ⁿ Gen. xvi. xxi. xxvi. 1—5. xxviii. xxxi. xxxii. xlv.

peculiar situations, states of mind, distresses, or infirmities.

And this is the more remarkable, because the Mosaic Law, and the history of the Israelites under it, are so frequently referred to as revealing the majesty, the power, and the severity of the Almighty. And the reference is correct. For the various attributes of God require to be unfolded to our view in varied lights and circumstances, in order that we may attain at last to something like an adequate conception of the nature of that great Being whom we adore. And the Law of Moses was no doubt designed in several ways to impress upon our minds reverend and awful thoughts of the justice and the holiness of God^o. And yet, all this notwithstanding, the loving-kindness of the Almighty towards His creatures, even towards His most wayward and rebellious creatures, is singularly displayed both by the Law itself in its great variety of considerate and most minute provisions, and by the continued history of the Israelites under its guidance. The same tenderness to their infirmities, which dictated the first course of their march from Egypt by the longer route, “lest peradventure the people should repent when they saw war, and should return to Egypt^p ;” and which was manifested by

^o See Exod. xx. 20.

^p Exod. xiii. 7.

the earnest and repeated care displayed even amidst the awful terrors of Sinai itself, lest the people or the priests should break through the barriers set around the mount and perish^a; the same parental kindness accompanied the Israelites in all their wanderings, and in their conquest of Canaan, and in their history under the Judges, under the Kings, in their captivity, and upon their return from Babylon.

Particular examples would here be almost superfluous. It is true they are not always obvious and prominent. There are beautiful examples of the *union of mercy with judgment* which are rather of a retiring character; as in the introduction of laws connected with the Land of Promise immediately after the condemnation of the Israelites to their forty years' wandering in the wilderness. For thus were cheering hopes infused into the minds even of condemned sinners; and they were still to look forward to the certain fulfilment of the divine promises, though in the persons of their children^r. Upon similar principles, after the great apostasy in the wilderness, the removal of the tabernacle out of

^a Exod. xix. 12, 21—25.

^r Compare Numb. xiv. 20—45. with xv. 1, 2, &c. For here, as in a multitude of other cases, the connexion of the sense will be lost if we allow our study of the Scriptures to be fettered by their modern division into verses and chapters.

the camp was calculated not only to make the presence of the Lord more visible, but also to afford to each repentant Israelite an opportunity of manifesting his contrition, by going forth from the camp to the tabernacle^s. So that in this example, as in the great appointment of sacrifice, the mark of the Divine displeasure was united with the means of reconciliation^t.

But if some of these examples are more concealed, in general they are obvious. And, which deserves particular attention, the proofs of the Divine placability and long-suffering are placed in immediate juxtaposition with the records of human sin and weakness. We can scarcely imagine, for instance, a more fearful picture of the proneness of priest and people to idolatry, even in the very midst of

^s Exod. xxxiii. 1—11.

^t I do not here assume that the primitive sacrifices were of divine appointment, though I believe them to have been so; much less that they atoned for human guilt, which I apprehend they did not. But if they were divinely instituted, they probably were intended to denote the guilt of the worshipper, and to procure for him, not indeed pardon for his sin, but acceptance for his worship. The Mosaic sacrifices of atonement, however, were unquestionably of divine institution; and these were evidently designed both to represent the punishment due to human guilt, and in some cases to be the means, in all to be the types, of actual expiation. See Appendix.

the miracles of redemption, than is presented by the apostasy of the golden calf which Aaron made in the wilderness. And it displays also the intimate connexion between idolatry and impurity; thus exhibiting throughout, in the strongest colours, the weakness and depravity of man^u. But read the continuation of the same account^v, and we have not only a record of the singular patriotism, piety, and disinterestedness of Moses seasonably introduced to prevent the supposition that human nature is altogether and incurably corrupt; but we have also a striking manifestation of the long-suffering and placability of the Almighty in immediate connexion with the narrative of His people's sin. These histories come together. They stand side by side. And it is the *combined* effect of them both upon the mind which is really profitable, not only for "reproof and correction," but also for "doctrine and instruction in righteousness."

Omitting, then, any further particulars of the Divine love during this portion of sacred history, let us rather listen to the words of Scripture itself, displaying the effect of the mercies of God upon those who witnessed them. The Song of Moses, the Psalms of David, the expostulations of the prophets, the confessions of Nehemiah and of the

^u Exod. xxxii. 1—6.

^v Ver. 7—14.

repentant people of Israel, all attest the fatherly care of Jehovah to His people throughout the whole extent of Jewish history.

“Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?” said Moses to the chosen seed; “Is He not thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath He not made thee, and established thee?” “Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him^w.” “In all their affliction He was afflicted,” says the prophet, declaring, according to the text, “the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to his great goodness towards the house of Israel, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses”—“in all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old^x.” Yet “their heart,” says the Psalmist, “was not right with Him, nei-

^w Deut. xxxii. 1—14. cf. Josh. xxiv. 1—18.

^x Isaiah lxiii. 6.

ther were they stedfast in his covenant. But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again¹.” “They were disobedient, and rebelled against the Lord,” was the confession of the repentant people after their return from the captivity, when they had experienced the whole course of God’s providence from their redemption from Egypt to their great punishment in Babylon; “they were disobedient, and rebelled against Him; they cast his law behind their backs, and slew his prophets which testified against them to turn them to the Lord, and they wrought great provocations ...yet in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto Him, He heard them from heaven; and according to his manifold mercies He gave them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies ...but after they had rest, they did evil again before Him.... yet when they returned, and cried unto Him, He heard them from heaven, and many times did He deliver them according to his mercies².”

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 37—39. cf. 1 Sam. xii. Hosea xiii. xiv. Dan. ix. 3—19.

² Nehemiah ix. 26, 27, 28.

Such were the mercies and the love of God confessed and celebrated by the Jewish prophets and people, and abundantly attested by the details of the Jewish history; love and mercies the most uniform and considerate, tender, forbearing, parental.

II. But this, it may be said, was loving-kindness manifested only to a chosen people, or to chosen individuals. Will such a partial history prove also the abstract goodness of the Almighty, or demonstrate His loving-kindness towards *mankind in general*?

The question affects the whole character and intention of the sacred histories of the Old Testament; and may deserve, therefore, to be distinctly answered.

1. But let the objection itself be confined within its proper limits. The Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament are, it is true, devoted almost exclusively to the fortunes of Abraham, his family, and his race; but they exhibit, nevertheless, numerous traces, both before the call of Abraham and after it, of the universal loving-kindness of “the Lord our God, who hath his dwelling so high, and yet humbleth himself to behold the things which are in heaven and earth.”

Witness those eminent proofs of the prospective goodness and wisdom of our Heavenly Father, the primeval institutions of the weekly Sabbath, and of Marriage ; the one the prime source of all the dearest charities between husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister ; the other a gracious boon and blessing to the great majority of mankind in relation to their temporal interests, and to all mankind a principal bond and seal of their spiritual intercourse with their Creator^a. Witness again the familiar instances of the great condescension of the Almighty towards our first parents after their fall, with relation to their animal wants, their clothing, and their food^b. And witness also that striking feature of God's good providence, His blending mercy with judgment ; as in the cheering prospect of a restoration accompanying the sentence upon the Fall ; and in that gracious promise of the Divine

^a Gen. ii. 1—3. 18—24. See Bishop Warburton, *Div. Leg.* b ix. vol. vi. p. 239, 240. edit. 1811.

^b Gen. ii. 16. iii. 21.

If on the sinner's outward frame
 God hath impressed his mark of blame,
 And even our bodies shrink at touch of light,
 Yet mercy hath not left us bare ;
 The very weeds we daily wear
 Are to faith's eye a pledge of God's forgiving might

Christian Year. Hymn for Sexagesima Sunday.

protection with which the new world opens immediately after the terrible judgment of the Flood^c. The long-suffering, moreover, and the placability of God, (those attributes in which a *fallen* race are so intimately concerned,) were not displayed towards the chosen seed alone. We all recollect His gracious expostulations with Cain^d; the long-suffering with which He “waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing^e,” His patient hearing of the Patriarch’s intercession for the guilty cities of the plain^f; His acceptance of the penitence of Nineveh^g; His withholding His avenging arm from the polluted nations of Canaan, (and not without many merciful warnings interposed,) “until the iniquity of the Amorites was full^h.” And those who may not consider themselves justified in adding to these instances the divine institution of the primitive sacrifices, may certainly refer to God’s accept-

^c Gen. iii. 15. viii. 21, 22. ix. 8—17.

^d Gen. iv.

^e 1 Peter iii. 19. 2 Peter ii. 5. Gen. v.

^f Gen. xviii. 17—23.

^g Jonah iii. 10. iv. 2, 11.

^h Gen. xv. 16. We should further observe the place in which these words are introduced; in the midst of a prediction, namely, which might otherwise appear to indicate only partiality towards a chosen race. In this situation the words have a peculiar propriety, and tend to declare the character and will of the Almighty; one of the leading purposes of the Historical Scriptures.

ance of those sacrifices as a signal proof of His placability and His mercy.

In a word, as the great Creator of the Universe, even among those who were the furthest removed from the written revelations of His mercy, “left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladnessⁱ,” so does He appear, in the written records of His loving-kindness, the gracious Preserver even of the meaner creatures of His hand; sparing Nineveh not only for her numerous people, but for her “much cattle^k,” “remembering not only Noah, but “every living thing that was with him in the ark^l,” enacting laws for the welfare not of the people of Israel alone, but of the dam upon her nest, and of the ox that treadeth out the corn^m.” Most strange and surprising therefore would it have been if these records had not also displayed, as we have seen, traces of care and love not merely towards the family of Abraham and the house of Israel, but towards all His rational creatures, however wayward and corrupt.

2. These observations, however, only limit the objection, but do not supply the most direct answer

ⁱ Acts xiv. 17.

^k Jonah iv. 11.

^l Gen. viii. 1.

^m Deut. xiii. 6, 7. xxv. 4.

to it. For what, in point of fact, are all the examples of the mercy of God to the chosen family, but so many instances of His loving-kindness towards mankind in general?

The very revelations, and other extraordinary providences, vouchsafed to Abraham and his posterity, were frequently calculated to benefit at the same time the nations with which they were brought into contactⁿ. But always, and without exception, the dispensations to the chosen people were so many successive stages in that vast preparatory system, which ushered in redemption itself, and the universal religion of the Saviour, embracing all the nations of the earth, according to the eternal purposes of Him “unto whom all His works are known from the beginning of the world.” The people of Israel were not chosen for their own sake. Nor were they chosen only for their fathers’ sake. Nor were the patriarchs, nor was Abraham himself chosen only for his own sake, but for ours, and for the general welfare of the whole human race. “In thee, and

ⁿ As in the instances of Abraham among the Philistines, (Gen. xxi. 22—32. xx. 2—18.) Isaac among the same people, (Gen. xxvi.) Jacob in Padan-aram, (Gen. xxx. 27.) the Patriarch’s whole history in Canaan; and that of the Israelites subsequently in Egypt, Canaan, and Babylon. And this was predetermined and designed: “All the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord.” (Exod. xxxiv. 10.)

in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed^o.” This great promise is the key to all those remarkable transactions, in which for so many centuries the peculiar favour of God appeared to be showered down upon the posterity of Abraham. We have already considered one of those remarkable provisions of the Divine wisdom and goodness, by which the trial of a part of mankind under a written law became instrumental to the reception of the Christian doctrines among all nations. But this is only one instance out of very many of the same kind. And, indeed, although every particular instance, in which the separation of the chosen people tended to the introduction of the Gospel, may not be familiar to the mind of every or scarcely of any Christian, yet the truth itself, in its main outline, is generally acknowledged by all. Every Christian is to a certain extent aware, that Abraham was called, and the patriarchs supported in a land not their own, and the Israelites were guarded in Egypt, instructed in the wilderness, separated from the nations in the land of promise—for the sake of Christianity, of Christians, of the whole human race.

3. In the partial history of a single family then, we do in effect discover the goodness of God to-

^o Gen. xii. 3. xxii. 18.

wards the universal race of man. But there is a further consequence of this arrangement, as beautiful as it is obvious. For hence it ensues, that the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament disclose to every reader the Divine mercies towards *himself*.

We have not merely examples of the loving-kindness of God to all men, (and these as numerous as the notices of the different nations, families, or individuals contained in the sacred records,) but we have instances of it in which we are ourselves affected, either by our natural or by our spiritual descent. For to whom are these histories addressed, but to Jewish or to Christian readers? And may it not be said, that the latter have even a nearer and dearer concern in them than the former? The Prophet indeed has said, “The Lord will not cast off for ever; but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men^p.” But we not only extend the sacred language in this general manner from the chosen people to all the nations of mankind. We adopt, as it were, the language of the prophets, which originally applied to another people. And in celebrating, according to the text, “the loving-kindness of the Lord, and his great goodness

^p Lam. iii. 31, 32, 33.

towards the house of Israel," we apply the passage, and increase its truth and force by such an application, to ourselves, and the true Israel of the later Church⁹.

III. Upon the whole, therefore, we may without hesitation conclude, that one of the leading purposes of the Historical Books of the Old Testament, was to display *the loving-kindness of God*; to display this great attribute of the Almighty in varied and continual operation towards His *lost and sinful* creatures; towards a fallen world, during its state of *condemnation*; and to display this merciful love of God to man in actual combination with that growing and accumulating proof, which the same Scriptures were all along preparing of human weakness and guilt.

1. May it not be added, that this is among the

⁹ Phil. iii. 3. Rom. ii. 28, 29. iv. 16. Gal. iii. 29. In the authorized version, accordingly, the contents of the chapter in which the text is written are thus stated. "Is. lxiii. 1. Christ sheweth who he is, 2, what his victory over his enemies, 7, and what his mercy towards his Church, &c. &c." The text itself is set in the midst of those prophecies of Isaiah, which occupy the latter half of the book, and which relate with few interruptions to the Church of Christ rather than to the Church of Israel.

peculiar offices of these Historical Books, and that they have a peculiar fitness for discharging it?

For certain portions of the sacred volume are occupied above others in setting forth certain of the Divine attributes in the clearest light. Thus the Law especially declares the Holiness and the Justice of God. His Faithfulness is proclaimed chiefly by the united voice of prophecy and history. But the Historical Scriptures remarkably demonstrate His Loving-kindness¹. Not even the Psalms, nor the Prophets, rich and glowing and impressive as their language is, could discharge this office effectually

¹ We are not, however, to lose sight of the important truth, that no single attribute can, from the very nature of the case, give an adequate idea of the divine Being. And we must beware of dwelling exclusively upon any one of them; but rather endeavour to comprehend them all. Inadequate and imperfect as our conceptions of the Divine nature must ever be, they will be less clear indeed, but at the same time less inadequate, if we endeavour frequently to contemplate the various attributes of the Deity together and in combination. See the representation given of Himself by the Almighty to Moses. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. But the whole subject must be approached with humility and reverence. We must neither imagine that the several attributes actually wear in the Divine mind that separate form and character, with which each of them, in condescension to human infirmity, is occasionally presented to our contemplation. Nor must we suppose that we can ever attain to an exact apprehension even of any one of them separately, much less of them all in combination. See Archbishop King's Sermon on Predestination.

without the history. Their foundation is laid in the historical facts. Their effect depends upon the recorded and detailed instances of loving-kindness.

Most true it is, that the best and most astonishing instances of the Divine love are set forth not in the Old Testament, but in the New. The mission of the Son of God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, immeasurably exceed every other act of love and mercy to mankind. And, certainly in the history of the dispensation of the Spirit, there are very many instances of the Divine condescension, tenderness, considerateness, and fatherly care^{*}: whilst the Gospels are one stupendous and unbroken monument of the Divine benevolence. But, in the latter, the manifestations of the love of God to man are not altogether immediate and direct. The calm, and gentle, but unwearied loving-kindness of the blessed Saviour, are in part designed as a bright example of the love of *man* to man. And besides all this, it is of the last importance, as has been already intimated, that we should see and know how God loved the world even *before* He gave His only-begotten Son to save the world; that we should see and know the demonstrations of His love, as they

^{*} For instance, the support, comfort, and assurance afforded in time of need to St. Stephen, Acts vii. 55. St. Peter, xii. 7. St. Paul, xxiii. 11.

are presented to our view directly and immediately in His intercourse with fallen man antecedently to redemption. By these at least we shall the better comprehend and appreciate His last and greatest work of love in our redemption and our sanctification.

2. And hence, in fine, our attention is directed to the *need* we have of the continual study of these ancient records, with the direct design of tracing the lineaments of this divine attribute.

One reason for this has been already noticed. For there will ever be a tendency to underrate the love of God to man, whilst our attention is absorbed by the melancholy consideration of man's sinfulness. But over and above this peculiar danger naturally attendant upon the contemplation of a twofold subject, to what a host of temptations has human nature been ever exposed, tending all of them, but in divers manners, to withdraw men from the devout and grateful appreciation of the Divine goodness! The pride of intellect, the baseness of the appetites, the light of science, or the darkness of ignorance, the absorbing interest of the objects of sense around us, the reflections of a false humility upon the littleness of man, excess of care and toil, or listless inactivity, may alike divert the mind from the best and worthiest object of its regard. Idolatry and Sabaism, the most widely spread of false religions,

what are they but different modes of substituting the creatures of the imagination or of the hand in place of the true and living God ?

But not even a true religion secures us altogether from the same propensities. There is not a single individual here who does not believe most implicitly, and most devoutly acknowledge, that in God he lives and moves and has his being ; that his Almighty Creator is also his tender Father, about his path, and about his bed, observing him and watching over him with the most solicitous and unwearied care, by night and by day, from infancy to old age, from the cradle to the grave. And yet not one among us, when he takes leisure to think seriously, but mourns over his indisposition towards the love of God, his proneness to forget God, to be little mindful of His presence, little thankful for His overflowing mercies, little desirous of His grace.

Nay, there is in truth an additional reason why the *Christian*, although he is the object of God's greatest love, should yet guard especially against the common danger. For to the elect people of God under the older dispensations His presence was more sensible, His providence more visible. By the Christian, the subject not of a temporal but of a spiritual dispensation, the gentle aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the best gift of God to His fallen

but ransomed creatures, is never seen, and is too often unthought of and forgotten.

But the remedy for these evils, the preservative against these dangers, is the devout and continual study of the word of God. The love of a man to his friend, the love of a child to his earthly parent, is maintained and fostered by a similar process. We do not know a man for our friend, because we are *told* that he is kind and friendly ; we must hear his words, and know his conduct. Even so must we learn to know God by His acts and by His word. The intercourse of kindness and the experience of benefits engender love. We must become habituated to the contemplation of His mercies. We must acquire, as it were, *experience* of His unceasing love by that daily intercourse with Him, which He vouchsafes to us in the written records of His character, His conduct, and His love towards His creatures. Nothing but this experience of the love of God will prove an unfailing resource in every trial, and none but the sacred records do or can give us this experience. No where except in the Historical Scriptures is it “the LORD” who acts in every thing. In these every thing is referred to God. We must become more and more familiar with these Scriptures, that we may be more and more disposed to give Him “most humble and hearty thanks for all His goodness and loving-kind-

ness to us, and to all men ;'' so that knowing Him and loving Him here in His word and providence, we may hereafter, through the merits of our Saviour, be admitted to His presence, and see Him as He is.

O God, who hast prepared for them that love thee such good things as pass man's understanding ; pour into our hearts such love toward thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE HISTORY OF PROVIDENCE. ITS USE AND VALUE
TO CHRISTIANS.

GENESIS xxxix. 2, 3.

And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

HERE is one of the characteristics of the sacred records. They ascribe nothing to chance, fortune, fate, destiny. They make no use of those terms, half unmeaning, half irreligious, by which men would fain gloss over their ignorance of the secret causes of events, or their want of belief in the good providence of God ^a.

^a The word "chance," indeed, occurs in the English Bible, 1 Sam. vi. 9. 2 Sam. i. 6. but as the expression of the Philistine and the Amalekite, not of the sacred historian. So Luke

Not that we are taught by the Scriptures to doubt the free-agency of man. Every page of holy writ implies the very reverse. As there are events ordered and brought to pass by the Almighty, so are there others merely permitted by Him, and of which mankind, or other created beings, are the authors. These and all events, nevertheless, of every kind, whether they happen by the appointment of God, or only by His permission, are every one of them under the inspection and superintendence and control of His all-seeing providence. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." "His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men"^h."

But this great fundamental truth, which prophets and apostles inculcate as a doctrine, is constantly asserted or implied by the sacred historians as a matter of fact. And this is one of their characteristics. It is their peculiar province to record the operations of Divine Providence as such. That is

x. 31. "by chance," *κατὰ συγχυρίαν*, which Chrysostom even explains (as opposed to *κατὰ συντυχίαν*) ὅταν τις κατὰ πρόνοιαν Θεοῦ τι ποιήσῃ but which no one can interpret as a denial of Providence. (See Schleusner in voc. *συγχυρία*.) So we find "time and chance," Eccles. ix. 11. (γενε "an occurrence"); but the passage actually inculcates the doctrine of Providence.

^h Acts xvii. 28. Psalm xi. 4. xxxiii. 13. xxxiv. 15, 16. lxvi. 7.

to say, they are not only entrusted in an especial manner with the history of the extraordinary interpositions of Providence, but to assert of any event, ordinary or extraordinary, that it occurred by the immediate appointment of the Almighty, is the prerogative of inspiration alone. Any credible witness might have recorded the fact that Joseph “was a prosperous man;” but no other than an inspired historian was, strictly speaking, competent to declare that “the Lord was with him,” and that “the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.”

Let us consider therefore *the use and value to us* of the sacred records in this their peculiar character, as the authorized expositors of DIVINE PROVIDENCE ; confining our attention, however, to the Historical Books of the Old Testament.

But the administration of Providence has not always been the same. It is governed by different principles, in some respects under the Gospel, and under earlier dispensations. That we may not mistake, accordingly, the right application and real value of the inspired histories, we must first call to mind the state of the fact as to the system of Providence which they describe ; and, secondly, endeavour to ascertain the amount of difference between the ancient system, and that under which we ourselves are placed.

I. The general *state of the facts*, then, recorded in the Old Testament, demands our attention in the first instance ; but so far, and so far only, as they illustrate the administration of Providence at the time. For we are seeking the use not of the facts themselves, but of the record. It may be, for example, that every incident in the eventful life of Joseph, from the dreams which excited the envy of his brethren down to their miraculous accomplishment, was of use, as an event, to us. For our benefit he prospered in Egypt, and his master saw his prosperity, and perceived that it was from the Lord : for hence his wonderful exaltation, and the consequent establishment of his family in the land of Goshen, there to be nurtured and trained a separate people, until they should be ripe for their redemption, and be prepared to occupy Canaan, to receive and preserve the oracles of God, and, in fine, to receive and to propagate the Gospel itself.

The most minute event, accordingly, in the history of any of the patriarchs may have been of use even to us, as a link in that great chain of causes, which connects the fall of man with our redemption. But this would be the use of *the facts* themselves ; and they might thus have produced the several events of which they were the successive causes, whether they had or had not been recorded. Our immediate concern, on the other hand, is with

the use of *the record*. But it is essential to observe the general character of the facts related, lest, in applying past events to present uses, we fail to discriminate between the systems of Providence under the Christian, and under preceding dispensations.

And the great leading circumstance which distinguishes all the history under review is this ; that throughout the whole of it the favour or the displeasure of the Almighty towards mankind was marked by *outward temporal prosperity or adversity*. For, taking the history as a whole, we may regard it as describing the providence of God, on the one hand, over those who were gradually departing further and further from religious truth ; on the other, over those whom He was gradually training for the ultimate reception of all truth. In the former case, in the records of the Patriarchal Churches and the Gentiles, we observe the light of true religion continually declining, and growing more and more feeble, till it was well nigh extinguished in utter darkness : in the latter, a new flame and a new spirit lit up among the chosen people of God, and by degrees cherished, strengthened, expanded, until it shone with all the brightness of the perfect day. But in either case it was necessary, whether for the purpose of retarding the utter extinction of the light of truth, or of nursing the growing flame into life and usefulness—in either

case it appears to have been necessary to make the Providence of God more visible and palpable than it is at present. And one of the obvious modes of accomplishing this end was by making Providence more *retributive*; or, in other words, connecting the Divine favour or displeasure more closely and more evidently with external prosperity or adversity.

1. We are familiar with this fact in the history of the *Jewish Church*; that is to say, in the far greater portion of the sacred records.

The extraordinary Providence, it is true, began to fail when it had accomplished its great purposes, although five centuries had yet to wear away before the Jewish Church should be replaced by the Christian. But the Jews had by this time been effectually weaned from idolatry and all propensity to it, and could not but believe in the great doctrine of a superintending and controlling Providence.

It is also true, that at no period of the most exact manifestation of that extraordinary Providence was it altogether *equal*; that is to say, exactly retributive, dealing out prosperity or adversity in precise proportion to the good or ill deserts of individuals^c.

^c See Lancaster's "Harmony of the Law and the Gospel," ch. iv. §. 2. p. 156 et seq. where this point has been, and I believe for the first time, well considered.

For neither was such an equal Providence necessary to the purposes in view ; neither *could* it always have been equal, so far as it affected individuals, and yet have been at the same time national. The famine or the sword could not so nicely and discriminately select their individual victims, without the most profuse expenditure of unprofitable miracles. And yet national judgments were especially needed for two of the great purposes distinctly contemplated by the display of Providence under the Law ; in order, namely, to reclaim the apostate Israelite, and to manifest to the eye of the surrounding nations the Divine justice upon the chosen people. Nay further, the partial inequality of the extraordinary Providence had great religious uses, as well in the separate trial of the individual, who felt it in his own instance, as in the gradual training of the people, who observed it upon a larger scale, for better promises and a higher dispensation. It was a preparation for the Gospel of Christ, and the great promise of life and immortality.

But, admitting these truths, and taking into account every just exception from the system of extraordinary Providence overshadowing the Church of Israel, so much is clear, that the sanctions of the Mosaic law were almost exclusively outward and temporal ; and that they were actually enforced and carried into effect to a sufficient extent to make

bare the arm of the Almighty, and render the truth and reality of His superintending Providence, although not its exact course and method, visible, palpable, and certain.

The general fidelity of this description will be recognised by all who are conversant with the history of the Jewish Church. And further they will recollect, that at whatever period the extraordinary Providence was either wholly or partially withdrawn, and whatever degree of inequality it admitted of during its continuance, still the facts recorded are the operations of an extraordinary and retributive Providence. Concerning the inequalities of its administration, the history is silent; our information at least on the subject is rather inferential and indirect, than direct and positive. Whilst with the cessation of that extraordinary Providence the sacred history also itself ceases.

2. And so it may be said, perhaps, of the Providence of God over the *apostate patriarchal Churches*, during the continuance of the Church of Israel, that, so far as the method of that Providence is revealed to us, it was retributive; it marked the displeasure of the Almighty by special judgments. But then little or nothing of that method is in fact revealed to us. We have examples certainly of signal judgments, as in the overthrow of the Egyp-

tians ; the punishment of the Midianites ; and the destruction of the seven nations of Canaan^d. And again in later times, in the destruction of Amalek^e, and the defeat of the Syrians^f. But these were rather the exceptions than the rule. That extraordinary providence which overshadowed the Israelites, did not attend upon the nations around them. Punishment and reward at least were not administered to these nations upon the same principles. For it will scarcely be supposed, that in each particular instance, when one of the surrounding nations was employed as the instrument of the Divine vengeance upon Israel, the victory was their reward, as the defeat was the punishment of the offending Israelites ; we can scarcely suppose, that the good or ill desert of these nations exactly alternated with those of the chosen people.

But, in truth, to relate the history of these nations was not within the province of the sacred records. And what may be known of the method of Providence with respect to them, is chiefly to be gathered from the books of the Prophets. In these, no doubt, are clearly marked the superintendence and control of God's providence over the benighted people who did not acknowledge Him, and the

^d Exod. vii—xv. Numb. xxv. 16—18. xxxi. Joshua.

^e 1 Sam. xv.

^f 1 Kings xx. 22—43.

haughty conqueror who knew not that he was “ the rod ” of divine anger, and that “ the staff in his hand was the indignation of the Lord^s. ” The Historical books, meantime, are almost exclusively occupied with the Church of Israel. They shew us indeed incidentally, that the same extraordinary Providence did not during the same period attend the apostate Patriarchal Churches. Yet, as was said, the little which they do expressly disclose of the system of Providence, even over these Churches, was judicial and retributive. And this circumstance also we shall have to recollect, when we consider the use of these records to ourselves.

3. But there is yet another and a very considerable portion of sacred history in the Old Testament. We have some notices of the state of mankind during the whole period *antecedent to the establishment of the Jewish Church*. And here again we often find the favour or the displeasure of the Almighty signified by external rewards and punishments.

Witness the great and signal judgments of the Flood ; the dispersion of the people at Babel ; the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But the divine providence over individuals also was of the

same character. It was extraordinary and retributive in the punishment of Cain, the translation of Enoch, the preservation of Noah, the selection of Abraham, and his chosen descendants.

These are but rare occurrences, it may be said ; they are insulated facts, scattered at wide intervals through the long period of five and twenty hundred years ; they do not establish the existence of a system. Nor is it contended that the system of Providence during this period was extraordinary ; or extraordinary at least to any extent compared with that over the Church of Israel. And yet the instances we have are not confined exclusively to the more eminent subjects of the history, or to individuals selected for special purposes. “ God dealt well with the midwives” of Israel, who disobeyed the barbarous edict of the king of Egypt, and “ saved the men-children alive ;” “ and it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses^h.” And the text implies, that external prosperity was generally recognised and understood to be an indication of the favour of God. Joseph’s master “ saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.” And this persuasion was not confined to that age or country. It was thus Laban

^h Exod. i. 17, 20, 21. cf. Gen. xxix. 31. xxxviii. 7, 10.

“learned by experience that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob’s sakeⁱ.” And thus the kings of the Philistines “saw certainly that God was with” Abraham and with Isaac^k. It is probable therefore that there was in fact a more frequent display of an extraordinary and retributive providence throughout the period antecedent to the Exodus, than was exhibited to after ages, except in the single instance of the Church of Israel. But whether this was so or not, still the circumstance especially to be noticed is this—the events *recorded* are of this description; they give the character to the record; and this is the point which is really material to our present purpose. For—

II. The state of the fact being such as it has been represented, how shall we apply to our own advantage the records of circumstances exceedingly different from ours?—But here we must endeavour to ascertain with somewhat greater precision the points in which the systems of Divine Providence under consideration do in reality *agree or differ*.

1. In the first place, in these periods, as in our own, and under every dispensation of religion, this

ⁱ Gen. xxx. 27. cf. xxxi. 42.

^k Gen. xxi. 22. xxvi. 28. cf. xxiv. 35, 36, 60. xlii. 21, 22.

life was and is *a state of trial or probation*. And all the circumstances connected with a state of probation are found in those earlier periods. Thus the free agency of man was always left unfettered. Providence never interfered in such a manner, or to such an extent, as to become compulsory; controlling absolutely, or superseding the free will of men. On the contrary, the great object, according to the Scriptures, of Divine Providence, from the creation of the world to the close of time, is so to guide the actions of men, as not absolutely to control their freedom¹. Again, although the system

¹ “The Divine Wisdom seems to have set apart the government of free agents as its peculiar province, &c.” Archbishop King’s “Origin of Evil,” chap. v. sect. v. §. 5. (Bishop Law’s translation) cited, together with other valuable passages from Bishop Butler’s Analogy, &c. on the Moral Government of God, by Dr. Graves, in a very useful note to his Lectures on the Pentateuch, Part iii. Lect. ii. There are, indeed, strong expressions in the Old Testament as well as in the New, which seem to express absolute compulsion; see Exod. iv. 21. Deut. ii. 30. Josh. xi. 20; as, if the Lord made Pharaoh, and Sihon, and the Canaanites to disobey His will, in order that He might destroy them. This is the literal sense of these expressions. And the difficulty is only shifted, not resolved, by interpreting the “hardening their hearts” with reference not to their will or moral powers, but only to their understanding. Yet if we recollect that the Hivites of Gibeon (not to mention the Gergashites, whose case is less certain) actually made themselves an exception to these strong declarations, and *did* save themselves from the

of Providence under the earlier dispensations was more palpably retributive than at present, it was at no time exactly retributive. It was not so even in the instance of the Jewish Church, at any period of her history ; much less was it so with respect to other Churches, or in the earlier dispensations. Joseph, the most blameless character perhaps recorded in history, was severely tried by afflictions not deserved. Jacob, however favoured of heaven, yet confessed to Pharaoh that “few and evil had been the days of the years of his pilgrimage^m.” And Abraham himself more than once found his faith fail him as he sojourned in strange lands devoid, as he thought, “of the fear of Godⁿ.” Then as now, in a word, mankind were tried and proved under the superintendence of Divine Providence, whose interpositions, however varied in manner or in extent, have never differed in principle.

2. In the second place, there is one great depart-

general destruction, it will be admitted that even in these cases there was no actual compulsion. These strong expressions may indeed imply that these sinners were abandoned to their own obstinacy, but not that they were compelled to be obstinate and disobedient, and then destroyed for their disobedience.

^m Gen. xlvii. 9.

ⁿ Gen. xii. 12. xx. 11. cf. xxvi. 7.

ment of Divine Providence which has never altered ; which runs like a golden thread through the varied tissue of the history of mankind ; and which, because it has never altered, is commonly termed the *constitution and course of nature*. It is by this that virtue and vice bring with them their own reward and punishment in this life in the way of usual or natural consequence. Thus temperance and industry, kindness and meekness, naturally promote health and wealth, the good-will of men, or internal serenity and peace. But however ordinary and natural are these consequences, they are not the less the appointments of the Divine Author of nature. And the inspired writers, not condescending, as was observed before, to refer events to fate, or fortune, or nature, are accustomed to speak of these natural consequences of vice or virtue as among the operations of Divine Providence.

3. We must take into our account, thirdly, that Christians are not at all warranted in concluding that there is no place reserved in the present system for more direct and immediate *interpositions* of Providence, especial mercies, or signal judgments. We can no longer recognise them, it is true, by any infallible signs. Inspiration is necessary to assure us, that any particular event is in this sense *providential*, is an especial interposition of Pro-

vidence, whether for good or for ill, in judgment or in mercy to mankind. Our blessed Lord alone could pronounce upon the innocence, or the guilt, or the degree of guilt, “of those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them^o.” But it is one thing to determine presumptuously that any event is a judgment, or infer the guilt of any man from his sufferings; and quite another thing to assert, that no signal judgments can occur under the Christian dispensation, punishments upon some, warnings to others, and earnestness to all mankind of judgment to come.

Even in this respect, therefore, the systems of Providence in earlier and in later times may have more resemblance in reality, than we are warranted in positively ascribing to them. But there are reasons, nevertheless, and important reasons, for believing that providential interpositions of a retributive character, and in the way of external prosperity or adversity, are at present *more rare* than under the earlier dispensations. For—

4. It must be observed, in the fourth place, that there are some positive marks of *difference* between the present and the earlier dispensations of religion, which imply a corresponding difference in the systems of Providence.

^o Luke xiii. 1—5.

In general, the whole character of the latest dispensation is more *spiritual*—more spiritual, probably, than the dispensations prior to the Law; and, certainly, very much more so than the Law itself; which in this respect was at its outset a retrograde movement, suited to a people in a degenerate condition^p. Our Saviour Jesus Christ “hath brought *life and immortality* to light through the

^p Revelation may have been, upon the whole, progressive from the fall of man to his redemption, and yet may have retrograded at some times and in some respects. Even as to doctrines, as well as types and predictions of the Saviour, it has been generally progressive; and yet the reverse is true, as to the Mosaic rites and the external sanctions of religion. Abraham was surely in a much higher religious state than his descendants, when they came forth from Egyptian bondage; and their ritual religion was, in its own nature, inferior to his. But the Mosaic rites, though a retrograde movement as religious services, were a step in advance as prophetic symbols. Hence the Law, being the shadow of a religion much more advanced than that of the father of the faithful himself, and being also regarded as if it were not improved but merely interpreted by the prophets, (an error which runs through Lowman’s useful work on the Hebrew Ritual,) is easily supposed to be altogether superior to the Patriarchal religion. Not to mention that too many are apt to run into some confusion between manners and morals; the more simple habits of early ages being mistaken for a lower state of civilization and moral culture.

But in the text I speak of the Law of Moses simply as it was in itself and in the first instance; not as it was subsequently

Gospel [¶].” This great promise is the burthen, as it were, of the New Testament ; it is the continual theme of doctrine, exhortation, consolation, and encouragement, throughout every page of this volume, to such an extent, as to distinguish it essentially not merely from the Historical books, but from every other portion of the Old Testament. Hence it would be to be expected, that every thing else should be in harmony with this great promise, and should lead the disciples of Christ “ risen with Him” to “ set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth [†].” But again, to Christians whilst yet on earth, what is the great privilege of the Gospel ?—*The presence of the Holy Spirit* ; the presence of God Himself, not dwelling as of old between the Cherubim in the tabernacle and the first temple ; not manifesting Himself in a pillar of cloud and of fire, or in the bright effulgence of “ the glory of the Lord ;” not visiting His chosen servants by heavenly messengers, ministering spirits ; but making the whole Christian church His temple, dwelling in the souls of Christians, and “ making

improved under the prophetic dispensation, nor yet as it is ennobled by the spiritual import of its symbols, and their connexion with the Gospel.

¶ 2 Tim. i. 10.

† Col. iii. 1, 2.

His abode with them for ever^s.” This great distinctive privilege of the Gospel would be yet a further reason, why “they that are after the Spirit” should be induced in every way “to mind things spiritual^t.” And the whole tenour of the language of the Christian covenant is in harmony with these expectations. “Godliness,” it is true, “hath promise of the life that now is,” as well as of “that which is to come^u.” But let the Gospel promises of *this life* be carefully examined, and what will they be found?—almost exclusively spiritual. For we may lay aside such expressions as relate not to any particular promise, but to the constitution of nature above alluded to, that is to say, the natural consequences of good conduct or good qualities; since these belong to all the dispensations of religion, and are, indeed, common to the godly with the prudent. Cheerfulness, industry, temperance, are almost equally calculated to conciliate good-will, secure health, promote success in the world, whatever may be their source or principle; whether they spring from Christian faith, or merely from prudence, or even the natural temperament and

^s 1 Cor. iii. 16. vi. 19, 20. Matt. xxviii. 20. John xiv. 15—18, 23. 1 John iv. 12—16.

^t Rom. viii. 5.

^u 1 Tim. iv. 8.

constitution. Laying aside such expressions then*, we shall find the Gospel promises of things external not like those of the Law, “blessings of the basket and the store;” “the fruit of the body, the fruit of the ground, the fruit of cattle, increase of kine, and flocks of sheep;” but restricted to one or two solitary general promises of the mere necessities of life^z; and these, to heighten the contrast, should be compared with the frequent and reiterated promises under the Gospel of blessings internal and spiritual. The “gladness and joy” of the first disciples are recorded and alluded to in a great variety of passages^a; but then they were joys accompanied, as our Saviour had foretold, by “persecutions^b”; they were consistent with “great trials of afflictions^c”; they sprang from the virtues, the doctrines, and the promises of the Gospel; from faith in Christ^d, patience in tribulation, the sense of pardon, the hope of glory^e. In a word, “joy and peace” were among “the fruits of the Spirit^f”; the early Christians “walked, according to

* See 1 Peter iii. 10—14.

^y Deut. xxviii.

^z Matt. vi. 24—34.

^a Acts ii. 46. xiii. 52. xiv. 3. Romans v. 2, 11. 2 Cor. viii. 2. 1 Pet. i. 5—8. 1 John i. 4. 2 John 12.

^b Mark x. 29, 30.

^c 2 Cor. viii. 2.

^d 1 Pet. i. 8.

^e Rom. v. 2, 3—5, 11.

^f Gal. v. 22.

the promise of their Lord, in the comfort of the Holy Ghost^g;" and the general description of "the kingdom of God" is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost^h."

Such, then, being the spiritual character of the Gospel, and such its promises and joys ; and it being a part of the system, that these joys should be often coexistent with tribulations and persecutions, or should be even caused by them ; it seems to follow, that the administration of Providence also would undergo a corresponding change. True it is, our heavenly Father chastened his children for their profit even under the elder dispensationsⁱ, but it would be more frequently true under the Gospel, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth^k." The character of a probationary state, having *future* reward and punishment in prospect, would be more constantly sustained. The present rewards of godliness might be indeed, so large is the bounty of God, even greater in amount, more exalted, and more constant, than when the hope of future glory was more obscure ; but then, these present rewards being more spiritual also, the favour and the dis-

^g Acts ix. 31.

^h Rom. xiv. 17. xv. 13. cf. John xiv. 16. xv. 11. xvi. 20—24. Phil. ii. 1. 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17. 2 Cor. i. 4, 5.

ⁱ Deut. viii. 5. Job v. 17. Psalm xciv. 12. Prov. iii. 11, 12.

^k Heb. xii. 10.

pleasure of God would be much less distinctly marked than formerly by outward temporal prosperity or adversity.

III. If the principal circumstances of agreement and difference between the systems of Providence under the Gospel and under the earlier dispensations have been correctly estimated, we may easily ascertain at once the *value*, and the *proper application* to the purposes of Christians, of the sacred records of the Old Testament as histories of Divine Providence.

1. For, in the first place, as to their correct application; wheresoever the Historical books of the Old Testament assert or imply the great doctrine that this life is a *state of probation and trial*, having reference to a future state of retribution, their application to ourselves is immediate and unqualified. Whatever passages or examples they contain to this effect are even *more* applicable to us than to the Patriarch or the Israelite, in so far as the Christian system introduces less of present temporal retribution.

As to the mode of trial again, the *natural constitution of things* being precisely the same, whatsoever events or feelings fall within this department of Divine Providence during the Mosaic or the

Patriarchal ages, are equally applicable to our own. The blessing of the meek, for example, that they should “inherit the earth,” is not peculiar to the Gospel; but in respect of that “abundance of peace in which the meek should delight themselves,” the blessing would hold good under any dispensation¹: and even with respect to external prosperity, like that of Joseph in the text, it may be true in part that “the Lord was with him, and made all that he did to prosper in his hands,” not by special interpositions, but under that general system of Providence which He has established as the Author of the constitution and course of *nature*.

But when we turn from the natural consequences of good or ill conduct to *extraordinary* rewards, or judgments, or other interpositions of Providence, greater caution is required. They may, no doubt, and probably do occur, in our own as in former ages; but we do not *know* them to occur; and we have reason to believe, that, with respect to the external recompenses of good or ill conduct they occur much *less frequently* than in the periods treated of in these sacred records. And several important consequences flow from these principles.

For we must not, for instance, assert of any calamity, that it is a *judgment* upon the unhappy sufferers; not even when we know upon other

¹ Cf. Matt. v. 3. Ps. xxxvii. 11. 1 Pet. iii. 10, &c.

grounds that they deserved punishment ; and much less when their guilt is only an inference from their sufferings. Nor again, because the sacred records are replete with accounts of providential interpositions, must we therefore affirm of any particular occurrences that they are *providential*¹ ; as if at least these were known to be so, or as if other events were *not* providential. With the exception of such events as free agents, under the Divine permission, themselves produce, *all* occurrences are providential, and come from God. Nor, again, are we at liberty to cite the extraordinary events, which are the principal subjects of the sacred histories, as *examples* of the existing administration of Providence. The partial change which has been described in the systems of Providence forbids their being so considered. The greater is the number of recorded instances of divine judgments, the less probability there is that similar judgments will be inflicted upon the guilty now ; because the guilty have now so many more warnings, so many earnest of judgment to come. And the instances recorded of external rewards, in like manner, will not be pledges of similar rewards to be bestowed upon the godly in *this* life ; but rather demonstrations of the faithfulness of God, and earnest of future and everlasting rewards.

¹ See Abp. Whately on Romish Errors, chap. i. §. 9. 1.

But the history of the Providence which watched over the Israelites, less than any other portion of these records admits of direct application to Christians. This part of the system of Providence was beyond question *extraordinary*. No one disputes the fact; strangely as Christians often forget its evident consequence, applying to themselves without reserve, under the ordinary administration of Providence, either the facts of the history, or the promises and exhortations in the Psalms and the Prophets built upon these facts, and appropriate only to a system confessedly extraordinary^m. And

^m In Sermons on the cholera, was it not common to speak of the judgments under the Law, (for example, upon Corah and his company, upon the people in the matter of Peor, &c.) as examples or instances of providential events, which might *therefore* be expected now? But the difference is this. The offences thus punished were most strictly examples of human conduct; they occur now, and are now exactly as much, or rather by reason of our greater advantages much more, the objects of the Divine displeasure. They are therefore lessons to us, and warnings to us; “they were written for our admonition;” (1 Cor. x. 11.) they are calls to repentance, as our Saviour taught in the case of the sufferers at Siloam; but they do not teach us that the same *judgments* are to be expected now; and if we so employ them, we contravene the acknowledged fact, that the providence over Israel was extraordinary.

On the other hand it deserves attention, that the Old Scriptures contain many records of actual judgments inflicted upon

least of all must we apply to Christian Churches or Christian nations, the passages which speak of the Divine Providence over the *Jewish Church*. Here the systems are often not merely dissimilar, but *contrary*. External prosperity was at once the sign and the reward of the purity and fidelity of the Church of Israel. But the outward circumstances of any Christian Church are not more the test of its internal state, than the sufferings of Jesus were a proof that He was not the true Messiah.

2. Will it be imagined that any of these restrictions tend to depreciate the *value* of these sacred records? They tend rather to establish at once their legitimate use and their extreme value.

Not one of these restrictions trenches upon that great and true use of these Historical Scriptures, which was alluded to in the outset of this Discourse; that the truth of a protecting and superintending Providence, which Prophets and Apostles teach as a doctrine, the sacred records describe as *a fact*. But the fact is unaltered; the change has

other nations besides the Israelites; a circumstance sometimes lost sight of by those who are careful not to misapply the events of Jewish history to Christian uses. In the proper application of those Scriptures, in a word, we must not fail to discriminate between the dispensations of Providence towards the Jew, the Gentile, and the Christian.

taken place only in the method of administration. And the change in the system gives its highest value to the record of the fact.

Doubtless the shield of God's good providence is not less extended over His children now that they are reconciled to Him, and become indeed His children in Christ. Though no one may now be checked in his persecution of a Christian, like Laban in his pursuit of Jacob, by the denunciations of God in a dream by nightⁿ; our heavenly Father has ten thousand other methods, though we know them not, by which to influence the minds of His creatures. And His protection, His care, His wakeful providence, even more surely attend the meanest Christian, than the most favoured of His servants of old. Our Lord Himself affords us this assurance; "even the very hairs of our heads are numbered^o." And hence the continual exhortations of the Apostles, "to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us^p;" "to commit the keeping of our souls unto Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator^q;" to trust securely in Him, "for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee^r."

ⁿ Gen. xxxi. 24, 29.

^o Matt. x. 30.

^p 1 Pet. v. 7.

^q 1 Pet. iv. 9.

^r Heb. xiii. 5. Josh. i. 5. A remarkable example this, upon Apostolical authority, of the just application of the principle of a

Here is the proper use and application of the facts recorded in the Old histories ; but their value also is enhanced a thousandfold by that very change in the administration, which forbids our applying them directly to ourselves. For we *need* this demonstration of the fact the more, because the workings of Providence are now less palpable and less retributive. The more we are called upon to walk by faith rather than by sight ; the more our attention is directed to spiritual blessings, rather than to external prosperity, and to future instead of present rewards ; so much the more a great deal do we stand in need of spiritual aid to animate our courage and strengthen our faith. And the Spirit of God directs us to “ the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God ^s. ”

Let it never be forgotten, that, different as are our circumstances under the Gospel, human nature is still unchanged. And if there be an evil tendency

passage in the Old Testament histories to the purposes of Christians. Cf. Josh. i. 5. Gen. xxviii. 15. Deut. xxxi. 68. 1 Chron. xxviii. 20. The passage in the Historical books is in no instance, like that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a general exhortation to trust in God ; but a particular encouragement held out to particular persons, Jacob, Joshua, the Israelites ; the principle of which nevertheless is applicable to God’s servants now as formerly.

^s Eph. vi. 17.

in human nature attested by all history, profane as well as sacred, it is the tendency to forget God our Maker, Governor, and Preserver. Now, blessed be God for his undeserved mercies, we are not in danger of forgetting Him after the manner of the Jew, or the Gentile, or even of the Romanist. We are not in danger of the abominations of idolatry. And if "fate" or "fortune" be on our tongues, they are not in our creeds. Error in doctrine is not our danger. But let no man deceive himself with the vain imagination, that he is altogether free from a weak and sinful propensity, which has beset and overcome for so many ages so many millions of his brethren. The same propensity will discover itself under different circumstances in different shapes. What are our *habits* of thought? Do we trust constantly and habitually in the good providence of God? Be it so that we stay on His providence in our greater trials, do we likewise in the less? It may be that we are free from excessive anxiety, apprehension, or distrust of His goodness under greater and rarer afflictions, persecution, oppression, pain and sickness, adversity, mourning; but do we summon our Christian principles to aid us at such seasons, yet forget them in our little daily crosses, disappointments, vexations, which are far from being the least important incidents of our probation? The bad propensity must be com-

bated at all seasons ; Christian habits of thought must be formed and sustained. And the Spirit directs us to the word of God ; that we may learn the principles of our trial from the New Testament, and yet be taught to sustain it not by Evangelists and Apostles alone, but by the Psalmists, and the Prophets, and the Historians of the elder covenants. And the value of the Histories is in their demonstration of the fact of the providence of God. They only, who are absolutely familiar with the fact, who are habituated to the contemplation of it in the sacred Histories, will derive the full benefit with which the Spirit of God designed to bless us in the calm wisdom of the Apostles, or the animating exhortations of the Prophets.

And no one surely will imagine, that affiance in God's providence, the most firm, and the most habitual, will ever paralyse our powers, or deaden our exertions. The Christian's trust in Divine Providence is utterly remote from the creed of the fatalist or the fanatic, and is equally distant from fear and from presumption. He " will not be afraid," indeed, " of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against him round about ;" " nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day ;" " yea though he walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will fear no evil, for the Lord

is with him[†]:" but his faith will only make him more cautious, and prudent, and active, and diligent; it will arm with courage and resolution even the constitutionally timid; and yet dispose every man to that great comprehensive virtue—Resignation. For all things are alike our trial; all events alike, the great and the small, our severer trials and our daily crosses, all are superintended by the good providence of God. His all-seeing eye looks through the darkest cloud that overshadows us; all trials are designed for our profit; and they tend, not indeed to outward prosperity, yet, if rightly borne, they all tend, through the grace of the Holy Spirit and the merits of the Saviour, to present peace and to future glory.

O God, whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth; we humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[†] Ps. iii. 6. xci. 6. xxiii. 4. cf. xxvii. 3. cxii. cxxi.

DISCOURSE V.

THE DIVINE FAITHFULNESS. PROMISES.

HEBREWS xi. 13.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

A BELIEF fervent, practical, enlightened, and habitual in THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD, comprehends a very large portion of vital religion. It branches off into two great departments of faith ; reliance on the PROVIDENCE, and trust in the PROMISES, of the Almighty : on the one hand, a stedfast belief in all that we know from reason or revelation of His preservation, protection, superintendence, and moral government of mankind in this life ; on the other, a firm trust in the gracious promises which revelation alone could convey to us, and especially in those, as beyond all comparison the most important, which relate to the life to come.

To quicken and invigorate a faith so extensive and important, and so difficult, moreover, to be constantly maintained, the greatest care has been employed by our heavenly Father. To prove His faithfulness, has been made one of the leading purposes of revelation. Almost every part of holy writ contributes to the proof. And to the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament in particular has been assigned no inconsiderable share in establishing the reality of Divine Providence, and the truth of the Divine promises.

But the right application and real value of these books, with reference to the providence of God, we have already considered ; let us enquire at present into the support they were designed to render to the faith of Christians in the DIVINE PROMISES. And this inquiry may be distributed under three heads : first, the instances which these Scriptures record of the faithfulness of God, in the actual fulfilment of certain of His promises ; secondly, the animating examples which they present to us, of faith in the Divine promises ; and, thirdly, the uniform preservation of the one great principle of faith throughout all the various dispensations of religion.

I. To prove the faithfulness of our heavenly Father, it was observed, is one of the leading

purposes of revelation. And vast is the debt we owe to revelation on this account. Without it, indeed, we should know by experience, and at this day the experience of many ages, the faithfulness of God as our *Preserver*. The return of the seasons, the increase of our corn and of our cattle, the life and the health of so many generations of men during six thousand years, nay, the feeding of the fowls of the air, and the clothing of the grass of the field, abundantly attest the never-failing care and bounty of our great Preserver^a. But of His *moral government* of mankind we should entertain very indistinct conceptions without the aid of revelation; and we should altogether want the most direct proof of His faithfulness, which consists in *recorded instances of special promises actually given and fulfilled*. Prophecy supported by history is the most signal proof of the Divine faithfulness. And the history of the elder Church of God; the very structure of Prophecy; and even the structure of the Historical

^a See Matt. vi. 26—32. and Paley's Nat. Theol. ch. xxvi. p. 515, et seq. ed. 1802, on the Goodness of the Deity. "Though there may be the appearance of failure in some of the details of Nature's works, in her great purposes there never are. Her species never fail. The provision which was originally made for continuing the replenishment of the world has proved itself to be successful through a long succession of ages."

books themselves will all be found employed in establishing or confirming the proof.

1. Great part of this proof, however, is often much obscured by the prevailing tendency to regard the whole compass of sacred Scripture as *one book*. Few indeed can overlook the obvious proof of the Divine faithfulness afforded by the long train of predictions in the Old Testament concerning Messiah and His kingdom, compared with the record in the New Testament of their accomplishment. But many may forget the intervals of time which separate different Historical books of the Old Testament itself, or the long periods which some of these books comprehend.

And this is a point deserving our attention and our gratitude. Revelation might have been one single act of divine goodness; and it might have consisted of declarations alone of the great truths of religion. But to strengthen our faith, and enliven our gratitude, it has been ordered differently. We have not merely declarations, but facts; not one book only, but a succession of books, containing a long detail of successive facts, some far removed from others, yet all connected in design, and each supporting the rest. Hence, for example, the whole book of Joshua, what is it but one entire proof of the faithfulness of God; and this in con-

sequence of the arrangement already described? For it is not merely a history of events, but a display of providence; and not a mere display of providential occurrences, but a record of facts long before announced; a history of the fulfilment of Divine promises given and recorded long before.

We are not of course regarding these prophecies and their accomplishment when recorded by the same writer, or in the same work, in the light of evidence. To the authenticity of the book or the inspiration of its author, they afford neither evidence nor objection. But we assume at present that the histories are authentic, and the writers inspired; and would only remark the provision made in the very *form and structure* of this portion of Revelation, its historical form, and its succession of distinct histories, for the greater confirmation of our faith. It is not merely declared, that “He is faithful which promised^b,” we are not merely exhorted to “commit the keeping of our souls unto Him as unto a faithful Creator^c,” but in the long series of historical works, which occupy so large a portion of the sacred volumes, we have the actual *records of the faithfulness of God* in the distinct fulfilment of successive promises.

^b Heb. x. 23. cf. 1 Cor. i. 9. x. 13. 1 Thess. v. 24. 2 Thess. iii. 3.

^c 1 Pet. iv. 19.

2. Again, the well-known *structure of Prophecy* has been adapted to the same purpose, and equally consults for human wants.

Thus, to illustrate this truth by a familiar instance. When Jacob fled from the face of his brother, and the Lord had appeared in Bethel to strengthen him, what was his vow? “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God^d.” Now the Lord had vouchsafed four distinct promises to Jacob: He had promised the land whereon he lay to him and to his seed; He had promised that his posterity should be exceeding numerous; and that in him and in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed; and, lastly, He said, “Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken of^e.” But to the last alone of all these gracious promises does the vow of the patriarch refer. It passes by unnoticed the future possession of Canaan; the numerous seed; the spiritual blessing to be derived through him and his seed to all the families of the earth; and it rests

^d Gen. xxviii. 20—22.

^e Gen. xxviii. 13, 14, 15.

upon the single promise of his personal protection, and preservation, and return to his father's house in peace. Nothing can be more natural than this ; and it is extremely instructive also. It exhibits in lively colours the weakness and the wants of man, and the gracious method adopted by our heavenly Father to sustain and satisfy them. The successive fulfilment of each of these several stages of the prediction would obviously strengthen the faith of the old fathers in the accomplishment of the next. The patriarch *was* protected, and preserved, and brought back to his father's house in peace : he would thenceforth be the better enabled to look forward in humble trust to the possession of the promised land. And we know that, however low and personal his vow, or however weak his faith when he framed it, yet though he was a wanderer in Canaan, and died in another land, he was buried in the sure and certain hope of inheriting the land of promise^f.

It is no less obvious, that the conquest of Canaan in after times, and the multiplication of the seed of Jacob, would gradually elevate and sustain the faith of his posterity, until they could look for that spiritual blessing, which should at length descend upon all the families of the earth ; that "salvation,"

^f Gen. xlvii. 28—31. xlviii. 3, 4. 21, 22. xlix.

which should be at once “ the glory of Israel,” and “ a light to lighten the Gentiles ^g.” Thus was the scale of the prophecy, like the ladder in the vision of the patriarch, set up indeed upon the earth, but ascending gradually unto heaven.

But the same gracious method which was so well calculated to strengthen the faith of the old fathers, was no less adapted to *our* advantage. And here also we might have had a very different form of revelation. We might have had no other than the great prophecies which form the basis of religion ; the promise of some restoration of a fallen world under the Old Testament, and that of eternal life under the New Covenant. We might have had these promises, and no more. But, instead of this, it has been part of the usual structure of Prophecy to bring together into one revelation distinct predictions, the higher and the subordinate ; combining (as in the revelation to Jacob already mentioned, and in many of the prophecies vouchsafed to Abraham and his posterity) a train of temporal predictions with spiritual, of nearer events with more remote ; and thus consulting alike for the wants of the old fathers and for ours ^h. *They* needed to have

^g Cf. Luke i. 54, 55, 76—79. ii. 25—32, 38.

^h What are termed double prophecies, are framed upon similar principles. But we are not so much concerned with these at

nearer events foretold, brought as it were within their view, and successively accomplished, to strengthen gradually their faith in greater events, but more remote ; and *we*, again, have the authentic *record* of all those events nearer or more removed which belonged to the first great subject of prophecy before Christ, in order to animate and sustain the hope and trust of the Christian in the glorious but distant promises of the Gospel.

3. But hence, thirdly, it became the appointed province of the whole *history of the first chosen people* to establish the faithfulness of Almighty God.

It became so in part from what has been already adverted to ; the general structure of the Historical books, and the peculiar structure of Prophecy. Thus the shifting dynasties of the kings of Israel, contrasted with the continued preservation of the line of David on the throne of Judah, afford an illustrious example of the effect produced by the history and the prophecy in combination¹. And a series of similar proofs is supplied by the temporal promises combined with the spiritual in the revela-

present, as with the class of prophecies above described, in which different and distinct predictions were revealed at the same time.

¹ See Davison's Discourses on Prophecy, Disc. v. Part ii.

tions to Abraham and the Patriarchs^k. So that, as was observed before, the whole book of Joshua became one continued record of the Divine faithfulness.

But, in truth, *all* the succeeding histories of the elder church became, under another point of view, so many records of the faithfulness of God: and this in consequence of the *temporal sanctions* of the Mosaic law. For these sanctions, what are they in effect but promises? They are *conditional promises* of reward or punishment contingent upon good or evil conduct, the obedience or the disobedience of the Israelites to their Law. But the sanctions being almost exclusively outward, temporal, punishments and rewards; and the obedience and disobedience moreover having respect in a very remarkable degree to external observances; (the neglect or the fulfilment of a ritual and ceremonial religion, the national observance of such conspicuous festivals as the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, and the national maintenance of the most singular form of polity;) it became possible and easy to do in this case what could not be done in any other, observe and record the obedience and the disobedience of the people, their reward and punishment;

^k See Sherlock on Prophecy, Discourse v.; and Davison, Discourses iii. and iv.

or, in other words, record the fulfilment of the divine sanctions. Hereafter indeed, when the volume of prophecy shall have been completely unrolled, and the writing deciphered, the history of the Christian Church will disclose a far more splendid prospect of the Divine faithfulness, than even the history of Israel. But the history of the elder Church, as it recorded the fulfilment of the *external* sanctions of the Law, became immediately and at once one entire record of the faithfulness of God.

And another circumstance also should not pass unobserved. For, the Mosaic sanctions being in their nature conditional, and many or most of the actual promises and predictions being conditional also, the History of Israel became in an especial manner instructive as the record not only of the fact, but even of the *mode* of their fulfilment. Not only do we find a signal proof of the Divine faithfulness in the history of the victories and defeats, the prosperity and the chastisements, of Israel always attendant upon their good or evil conduct, and always attesting the reality of the Mosaic sanctions and the truth of the Divine promises ; but we see, at the same time, the *manner* of the conduct of our heavenly Father towards his wayward creatures remarkably and no doubt designedly displayed. The conquest, for example, the possession, and the enjoyment of the promised land, were all conditional,

although no express condition appears annexed to the original promise. Of that first generation, all alike called to the inheritance of the promise, two only were permitted to enter Canaan¹. And those who conquered it, although taught most palpably and experimentally that their success was not due to their own arm or their own might, yet could not succeed without their own exertions. And then, how slow, and even in the end how incomplete, was that conquest! evidently by default of their exertions and obedience, and in spite of repeated warnings and protestations on the part of their heavenly Sovereign. So admirably is the history adapted to all our wants, and calculated alike to admonish our waywardness and to confirm our faith, by the distinct attestations it affords in every page both to the method and to the fact of the Divine faithfulness.

II. Hitherto we have seen only the gracious conduct of God. We are next to observe a very important advantage to be derived from the Scripture history of man.

It has pleased our heavenly Father, in condescen-

¹ See Abp. Whately on Election, "Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul," Essay iii.

sion to our infirmities, not only to declare His truth, nor merely to connect this attribute with our very idea of His essence, but to prove its reality by facts: and this, not only by the uniform tenour of his bountiful providence, but also by the course and method of revelation. For this purpose, among others, so large a portion of the word of God is historical. And the plan of the histories, the structure of prophecy, and the history of the elder Church under the temporal sanctions of the Law, have all been adapted, as we have seen, to supply the most direct demonstration of His faithfulness, by the records of Divine promises given and fulfilled. For, indeed, we required *conviction* more than proof; practical belief more than intellectual assent. And the history of facts was the species of proof the most convincing and the most useful.

But the self-same principle of human nature suggests the reason for another great commission of the Historical Scriptures; that of recording *examples of faith* in the truth of God's promises.

1. Who can doubt, for instance, that this is one of the great uses of the sacred history of *the father of the faithful*? His trust in the Divine faithfulness, we readily admit, is no proof of its reality; but his faith notwithstanding will strengthen ours. And more especially, combined as it is with the history

of direct proofs of the faithfulness of God, it tends exceedingly to deepen the impression of those proofs upon our minds ; to animate our conviction, our practical conviction, of it : and this is the very thing required. Let us read these sacred histories for their great purposes ; not that we may observe with minute and frivolous curiosity the little accidents of character, much less that we may attempt a tasteless modernization of the circumstances and situation of prophets and patriarchs ; but to trace the workings of the human heart under different modes of trial, and behold doctrines embodied in living examples : let us study the history with these views, and we shall not fail, under grace, to derive advantage from the record of Abraham's faith, and of the fruits of his faith. His meekness, and charity, and disinterestedness, and piety, (upon his separation from Lot, for example ; his intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah ; his refusal to receive reward from the confederate kings ; his building an altar to the Lord at the several stations of his pilgrimage ;) these, as well as the more direct examples of his faith in his abandonment of his country, his sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country, his patient trust in promises long deferred, his believing in hope against hope, his offering up his only son, the heir of the promise, will all be found of eminent use in strengthening

and enlivening the faith of the Christian^m. And what is true of Abraham is true of Abel, and Noah, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, of Moses and Joshua, of Samuel and David, and the Prophets, and the Martyrs, of the old dispensations. Their history was recorded and preserved by our gracious Father, that we might be “compassed about with a cloud of witnesses,” and that the animating examples of their faith might strengthen ours.

2. And it is obvious that the examples of faith recorded in the Old Testament, may be even more animating than those in the New, because they were exhibited under *inferior advantages*—knowledge more contracted, obscurer hopes, without that glorious promise of spiritual aid, without that long array, which we possess of proofs of the faithfulness of God, the results of special promises already fulfilledⁿ. Nevertheless, it is written, and written

^m Heb—, xi. 819. Rom. iv. 17—22.

ⁿ It has been said, that these examples have a peculiar advantage even when compared with “the great Exemplar:” because the strength of faith is in proportion to the weakness of knowledge, and the divine knowledge possessed by our Lord of necessity made the quality of His faith so much the less conspicuous. But we are in danger of refining too far, whenever we contemplate the value of our Lord’s example by the light of His *divine* qualities. We should dwell upon the *facts* alone as exemplars of

for us and all the members of Christ ; “ these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Does it detract from the force of the examples of prophets and martyrs in after times, but still under the old dispensations, that they *did* witness the fulfilment of many successive promises, and were accordingly blessed successively with additional proofs of the Divine faithfulness, more than had been vouchsafed to their predecessors in the faith ? Yet it is obviously true of these and of the whole catalogue of the servants of God, whose praises are celebrated by the Apostle to the Hebrews, that not one of them was permitted to witness the fulfilment of the great promise under the elder dispensations, the restoration of fallen man ; much less the accomplishment of those higher and heavenly promises, “ the better resurrection,” the “ heavenly country,”

human virtue, and not attempt to measure the strength by which they were sustained. Compare 1 Pet. iv. 19. with the examples referred to in the margin ; of David (Ps. xxxi. 5.) ; St. Paul himself (2 Tim. i. 12.) ; and of our Lord Himself, according to St. Luke xxiii. 46, “ Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit ;” and this contrasted with His awful exclamation just before, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” (Matth. xxvii. 46.)

to which, dim and distant as they were, their faith had been raised^o. Of all these accordingly it is true, that “having obtained a good report through faith, they received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect^p.”

III. But all this accumulated treasure, whether of gracious instances of divine truth, or bright examples of faith, how much less would it have availed to our advantage had not a common principle bound together in one the various dispensations of religion? This bond of connexion is the great principle of faith. To trace the continued preservation of this principle was the third branch of our proposed inquiry; and a right conception of this subject appears essential to a just appreciation of both the former.

1. The only difficulty in the question grows out of the contrast between the Legal and the Evangelical covenants. For “the just shall live *by faith*”—“being justified *by faith* we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:” this is the language of Prophets and Apostles concerning the

^o See Heb. xi. 13, 14, 16, 26, 39.

^p Heb. xi. 40, 41.

Gospel^q. The Law, on the other hand, we are told, “is not of faith, but, The man that *doeth* them shall live in them.” And again, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to *do* them^r.” Such is their language concerning the Law. And hence the contrast often described or alluded to between “the works of the law,” and “the hearing of faith;” between “the covenant of works” and “the covenant of faith^s.”

2. And yet, notwithstanding this contrast, the principle of faith as the foundation of all religion, and the only instrument of our justification to eternal life, has been consistently and uniformly maintained before the Law, and under it, as well as in the last dispensation.

Thus it is to be remembered, in the first place, that Christians themselves are “heirs according to the promise,” the promise conveyed to the father of the faithful long before the Law. We are, accordingly, “the children of Abraham,” being the imitators of his faith, and, because we “are of faith, blessed with faithful Abraham;” “and the Scripture,

^q Gal. iii. 11. Hab. ii. 4. Rom. v. 1.

^r Gal. iii. 12. 10. Lev. xviii. 5. Deut. xxvii. 26. cf. Neh. ix. 29. Ezek. xxii. 11. Jer. xi. 3. Rom. x. 5.

^s Gal. iii. 2, 5. 15—17. iv. 21—24, &c. Rom. x. 5—17.

foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed ^t.”

Thus was the Gospel principle of justification by faith foreshewn; nor was it merely foreshewn, but it was also acted upon long before the Law. For Abraham himself was justified by faith. “He believed God,” and “his faith was reckoned to him for righteousness ^u.” And this, not only prior to the Law, but prior to the institution of circumcision itself: and “he received the sign of circumcision,” the token of the everlasting covenant, as “a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had yet being uncircumcised ^x.” Here then was the principle of faith acknowledged before any covenant; and embodied in the great covenant with the father of the faithful; which preceded by four hundred and thirty years the covenant of works, and comprehended within its gracious sphere all who should hereafter believe like Abraham, “that righteousness might be imputed to them also ^y.”

Yet, again, this original covenant the law of works neither superseded nor contradicted. The

^t Gal. iii. 7, 8, 9, 29.

^u Rom. iv. 3, 9, 18—22. Gal. iii. 6. Gen. xv. 6.

^x Gen. xv. 6, 18. xvii. 7, 11. Rom. iv. 11, 9—25.

^y Rom. iv. 11.

Law had its own purposes, and its own sanctions. But it did not even name life eternal among its sanctions ; much less did it make eternal life contingent upon perfect obedience. It neither promised eternal life upon the performance of an impossible condition, which would have been mockery ; nor disannulled the earlier covenant of faith without the consent of one of the parties to it, which would have been injustice². In a word, it was the error of men who had indeed “ a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,” which sought for justification through the works of the Law ; and failed to perceive that the Law did not, and could not, set aside the original covenant of faith ; and that Christ was in truth “ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth¹.” Nay, and even under the Law, and notwithstanding its peculiar sanctions and requisitions, faith was still the great foundation upon which religion rested. For not only was justification still to be attained by faith only, but there were still so many promises presented to the eye of the believer, and there was left so much of inequality in the administration of the peculiar sanctions of the Law, even during its greatest vigour, that the Israelite was called upon to walk not by sight but by faith, and the principle of

¹ Gal. iii. 15—24.

² Rom. x. 1—4, &c. cf. ix. 30—33.

his daily trial was the same with our own. Consider the murmurs and rebellions wherewith the meek spirit of Moses himself was vexed in the wilderness; or the vicissitudes and distress which harassed David during the long continued persecutions of Saul; or listen to the voice of suffering, and the prayers of faith in so many of the Psalms; and we cannot doubt that the principle of faith was by no means in abeyance even under the Law itself. The Law did but introduce for a time one more variety into the trials of a portion of mankind, and still left the essential character of their trial unaffected.

And if this was so even under the Law, no one will doubt that the same truth holds of mankind under every previous dispensation, even from the period of the fall. And thus it is written, that Abel by faith “obtained witness that he was righteous,” and Noah “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith ^b.”

3. How could it, indeed, have been otherwise? A creature like man, fallen and sinful, cannot of himself be righteous before his Creator. If God will be pleased to regard him as righteous, it must be through some act of *grace*. And if this grace

^b Heb. xi. 4, 7. See Davison on the Primitive Sacrifices, p. 117—126. 184—186.

be revealed at all ; if it be foretold, or foreshadowed ; if any partial disclosure of it be made ; or any promises vouchsafed preparatory to it ; in every one of these cases faith is that faculty of the soul whereby alone we can apprehend the revelation or the promise. By the very nature of fallen man, therefore, faith is the only medium of his justification. But yet, further, if there be a promise of any distant good, or a threat of evil, by faith alone the promise or the threat can be contemplated. And we know that the history of such threatenings and such promises is coextensive with the history of religion. Nay, and even God Himself, the author, and object, and end of all religion, can neither be apprehended, nor obeyed, nor feared, nor loved, but through the medium of that faculty which is “ the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The amount of knowledge vouchsafed, or the nature of the promise held forth, does not affect the *sentiment* of faith in the believer. That sentiment is the same in Abraham and in the Christian, when the one journeys in quest of a strange country, or the other looks onward to heaven ; when the one offers up his only son, or the other sacrifices the dearest affections of his heart, or consigns his child to the grave in certain hope of the resurrection and of eternal reward. In a word, it could not but be true, according to the nature of man as well as his history,

that the one principle of faith should have been in all times and under every dispensation, the root of all religious obedience, and the basis of religion itself.

4. Not one word, therefore, is written in all the Histories of the Old Testament concerning the truth of God's promises, or the trust at any time reposed in them, which is not written for our benefit—written, says the Apostle, that “ seeing we also are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses, we may lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith^b. ”

But none will duly appreciate the *value* of these sacred writings, or of the support which they were designed to render to our faith, who will not consider the extent, the importance, and the difficulty of this great principle of faith. We have seen, that faith is coextensive with religion itself; and in importance commensurate with our hope of eternal life. And what need is there to enlarge upon the difficulty of maintaining it? It is *the* great practical religious difficulty, into which almost every other is resolved.

I speak not merely of the infidel and the blasphemous, the sensualist, the man of the world; of

^b Heb. xii. 1, 2.

those who close the ear against every evidence and every promise, and have no eye but that of sense ; nor yet of that sceptical philosophy, which debars the activity of the intellect from the most exalted subjects of research and contemplation, which sees every thing past and present, and yet is blind to all things future, all things beyond the limits of this sensible creation ; passing by at present the melancholy consideration of men in this condition, we may perceive the difficulty of maintaining faith by the very errors of religious men. It is the want of faith, and not the excess of it, which makes some require sensible tests of the influences of the Holy Spirit ; and others seek for positive assurances of election or salvation, in the stead of patient and scriptural hope ; which makes one man zealously assert the reality of recent miracles, as if the evidence of the Gospel had not been long ago securely established ; and another eagerly anticipate the fulfilment of all prophecy, as if the present age were the only one within the prospect of the Divine prescience. And to what again but to the want of constant and enduring faith in the Divine promises must we attribute our daily, hourly, transgressions not of the laws of God alone, but of our own best resolutions ? our perpetual preference of the things that are seen to the things that are spiritual but unseen, though they are great and

gracious as the influences of the Holy Spirit, and important as everlasting life? There is not one among us who does not need to be perpetually reminded, amidst the toils, or the distresses, or the anxieties, or the pleasures of this life, that he also is but “a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth.” Not one who does not perpetually need to lift up that humble prayer, “Lord, increase our faith.” Not one therefore who has not ample cause to receive and to use with devout gratitude all those gracious means with which our heavenly Father has blessed us, in order to strengthen our conviction of His faithfulness, and to invigorate our hope and trust; until our pilgrimage be past, our race run, and we at length, through the precious blood of Christ, receive among them that are called “the promise of an eternal inheritance.”

Almighty and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service; Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DISCOURSE VI.



ANTICIPATIONS OF THE GOSPEL IN THE OLD HISTORICAL
SCRIPTURES.



GALATIANS iii. 8.

*And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the
heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto
Abraham, (saying,) In thee shall all nations be blessed.*

ALL Scripture is derived from one Author, and discloses His will and His dealings towards His own creatures. Even as it is written, “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world;” and again, “All Scripture (is) given by inspiration of God^a.” We cannot therefore be surprised if some intimations and disclosures of the last and best dispensation have been vouchsafed in all that preceded it.

And the fact has been so. Not only were the truths of the Gospel, even in their minuter linea-

^a Acts xv. 18. 2 Tim. iii. 16.

ments, foreshewn by the Psalmists and the Prophets ; but they were remarkably foreshadowed under the Law, and implied and even announced in the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament. So obvious indeed is the fact, and so little are Christians usually inclined to dispute it, that the prevailing current of opinion runs only too much in its favour. There is perhaps a very general disposition to overstate the fact ; to undervalue the distinctions between the later and the earlier dispensations ; and to read the very truths of the Gospel directly and immediately in the first pages of the book of Genesis. From the popular language of theology, for example, it might almost be imagined, that Abel offered his acceptable sacrifice with a degree of knowledge as well as faith little inferior to that with which a Christian celebrates the Eucharist ; and that his offering procured the actual forgiveness of his sins, even as if the great sacrifice upon the cross had been already offered and accepted. In a word, truths implied have been mistaken for truths taught ; and Christians have often overlooked the distinction between the sentiments of faith entertained by the old fathers, and their actual knowledge of Gospel doctrines ; and between truths understood by us in the full sunshine of Christianity, and the same truths concealed amidst the obscurity of the elder dispensations.

And the evil consequences of these mistakes are twofold. Unbelievers are prejudiced against all our interpretations of Scripture, when they observe us ascribing to the earlier parts of it senses so manifestly strained and fanciful: and believers are induced to under-rate, in comparison with the privileges of the faithful servants of God before the death of the Redeemer, their own higher and inestimable advantages, and, therefore, their own more awful responsibility.

These mistakes and exaggerations, and their dangerous effects, have been thus protested against in the outset, lest in the prosecution of my subject I should be suspected of confounding its use with its abuse; and lest the considerations about to be offered should be received with prejudice, or be supposed to be carried further than is really designed, respecting the ANTICIPATIONS OF GOSPEL-TRUTH in the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament.

I. As to *the fact* that such anticipations exist in the Old Scriptures, the text itself at once declares its truth, and affords two remarkable examples of it.

1. "The Scripture preached before the Gospel unto Abraham"—προεσηγγελίσατο τῷ Ἀβραάμ.—and very remarkable was the Gospel thus dis-

closed, comprehending the great principles of a *universal* covenant, and of justification *through faith*.

We shall hereafter advert to the uses of these anticipations, and may at present confine our attention to the fact of their existence. And the fact is itself well worthy of our attention, independently of its uses. Hence, for instance, the pious exclamation of St. James already cited, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;” an exclamation forced as it were from the lips of the Apostle, when he heard “what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles,” and perceived that with these things “agreed the words of the Prophets^b.” But *we* have yet further cause to adore the mercy and the foreknowledge of our heavenly Father; in that He announced the character of the Gospel as a universal covenant, not only by the Psalmists and Prophets, but even to the father of the faithful himself, four hundred

^b Acts xv. 6—18. Amos ix. 11, 12. Obadiah 17—21. Comparing the accounts of the apostles’ recognition of the Gentile converts, Acts xi. 1—18, in the instance of Cornelius and his friends, and again, with respect to the converts at Antioch, Acts xv. 1—18, it would seem that at first the apostles, although they recollected indeed the words of the Lord, Acts xi. 16, did not as yet consider that the Prophets also had intimated these very things long before. But St. Paul traces the matter yet further than St. James, even to the promise given to Abraham himself.

and thirty years before the very institution of the partial covenant of the Law^c.

And, perhaps, the other example contained in the text is more remarkable still. For not only was the call of the Gentiles announced four hundred and thirty years before the Law, but the mode of their justification was intimated at the same time. The Law was not only a partial covenant, but it was essentially a covenant of works; yet long before was the better covenant anticipated in both its glorious characteristics, as the religion of all mankind, and as a covenant of faith.

I forbear to enlarge upon this great subject; having already in the preceding discourse endeavoured to contrast the covenants of faith and of works, and to shew that the principle of faith was consistently maintained both before the Law and under it; and that it is indeed the essential principle of religion, both as the only instrument of justification, and as the basis of all religious obedience^d. It was only necessary to make a brief reference to the subject here, because it was one of two remarkable anticipations of Gospel-truths in

^c Gal. iii. 8, 14. Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18. Acts xiii. 46—48. Is. xlii. 6. xlix. 6. Rom. x. 18—21. Deut. xxxii. 21. Is. lxxv. 1.

^d Discourse v. §. 3.

the Old Scriptures suggested by the text itself, and recommended to our consideration by the authority of St. Paul. And by the light of these brilliant examples, we may easily proceed to trace out other instances of similar anticipations.

2. Here, however, two circumstances must be borne in mind. In the first place, since our attention is restricted to the Historical Scriptures, we cannot expect to meet with those full and exact disclosures of Christian doctrines, which are sometimes supplied by other portions of the Old Testament : such as the intimations of the doctrine of eternal life in the later Prophets ; or the wonderful adumbrations of the doctrines of mediation and atonement in the significant shadows of the Mosaic Law. And, secondly, we are not to lose sight of the important principle already adverted to ; that we must expect, namely, to find the old fathers holding not so much the same Christian doctrines with ourselves, as the germs or principles of those doctrines, the sentiment of faith rather than the dogma. The principle is implied in the very expression *Christian* doctrines. To forget it is to deprive the Christian system of its peculiar lustre ; and to conceal from Christians themselves their distinctive privileges, and higher responsibility. And yet it is forgotten in those popular views of

theology, which treat the many volumes of Scripture old and new as one book ; overlook the important fact, that religious truth from the fall to the redemption of mankind has for the most part been progressive ; do not observe, that the clearest prophecy to the Christian understanding may owe all its clearness to its having been interpreted and fulfilled ; and, in a word, regard the old fathers as scarcely inferior to the disciples of Christ except in this, that we believe in a Saviour who has appeared, the Patriarchs in one who was yet to come.

Let us take, for example, the great Christian doctrines of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and of eternal life.

Compare the New Testament with the Old ; compare especially with the old Scriptures those parts of the New Testament which belong to the period when the Holy Ghost was to be given, that is to say, when our Lord had been already glorified^e ; and nothing can be more marked and striking than the distinction between them respecting *sanctification by the Holy Spirit*. Of the volume of the new covenant it forms the second great prevailing subject ; in that of the old it is only not omitted altogether. Take away some of the predictions in the Prophets concerning the gift of the Holy

^e John vii. 39.

Ghost^f; and one or two remarkable expressions in other places, particularly those of David in the fifty-first Psalm; and the doctrine which glows in almost every page of the New Testament is omitted in the Old. Yet an expression of this kind is found, like a light shining in a dark place, even in the earliest of the Historical books; “my Spirit shall not always strive with man^g:” and, which is of much greater consequence, the doctrine is *suggested* to the mind of the Christian by many other modes besides the literal expression. The ordinary graces of the Spirit, for example, are suggested by His extraordinary gifts: and these in the dream or vision, revelation, or prophecy, or miracle, are of continual recurrence, throughout the Historical Scriptures. And, again, the type suggests the antitype. The visible presence of the Deity in the cloud of glory in the tabernacle or the first temple suggests to the mind of the Christian, not only the idea of the Son of God tabernacling in the flesh, but that of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the great temple of the Christian Church, and in every one of its individual members. Hence he is carried further still; and beholds the germ of the same idea, not only in every

^f Compare John vii. 37—39. iv. 14. with Zech. xiv. 8. Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. Is. xlv. 3. Ps. li. 2. cxliii. 10. Haggai ii. 5, et seq.

^g Gen. vi. 3.

allusion to the Shechinah in the Historical books subsequent to the Law, but in every instance, (and there are many such in the history before the Law^b,) of the peculiar presence of God and His personal intercourse, if it may be so expressed, by whatever mode, voice, or vision, or angel, with His servants upon earth. In a word, if we go at all beyond the limits of actual anticipations of Christian doctrine, and enter within the confines of mere suggestions of it, the Christian student will find the Author of all holiness suggested by every mention of the Divine holiness itself: and every instance of heavenly aid, and solace, and support under merely temporal dangers and distress, (and we have formerly seen how abundant are such instances in the instructive history of Abraham and the Patriarchs,) will suggest the thought of the Sanctifier and Comforter in every spiritual difficulty and conflict.

The case is nearly the same with the doctrine of *eternal life*. The true doctrine, which is altogether distinct from those which too often claim kindred with it concerning the immortality of the soul, the

^b Four during the possession of Eden, Gen. i. 28—30. ii. 16, 17, 19. iii. 18—21. Five between the fall and the flood, Gen. iv. 6, 7. 9—15. v. 24. vi. 13—21. vii. 1—4. Others again prior to the call of Abraham, Gen. viii. 15—27. ix. 1—17. And very many throughout the history of Abraham and the Patriarchs.

true doctrine, teaching that eternal life is no natural inheritance, but the free gift of God through Jesus Christ, is essentially a Christian doctrine. It could only be received under the elder dispensations (and that it was received we are assured by St. Paul himself) by anticipation; by some blessed anticipation of the day of Christ. Nor could it be taught but by some connexion, however remote, with the merit of Him who died upon the cross to purchase it for us. The doctrine was therefore kept in abeyance, as it were, during the glory of that covenant of works, which could give neither life nor righteousness¹; and was only gradually disclosed by the Prophets, as that glory faded away, and eternal life could be safely taught, together with the atonement upon which it rested^k. Hence the extraordinary contrast exhibited in respect of this doctrine between the Old Scriptures and the New; and hence, probably, the mysterious fact, that the Pentateuch contains no single promise of eternal life. Yet even from these volumes, under the instructions of our Lord Himself, we can gather proofs of the doctrine^l, and can discover in the

¹ Gal. iii. 21, 22.

^k See a striking sketch of the gradual disclosure of the doctrine of the Christian atonement, by Mr. Davison, "Primitive Sacrifice," part iii. p. 167—179.

^l Exod. iii. 6. Matt. xxii. 23—33. See note in Dissertation upon Unauthoritative Tradition, p. 66.

sacred histories events recorded, as the translation of Enoch, and the ascent of Elijah, for the very purpose, we may presume, of suggesting or confirming it^m. The faintest moonlight can unfold the form of objects to the eye which is familiar with them. And the Christian can discover the principle of the doctrine, or at least a sentiment of faith analogous to it, in that patient waiting for the fulfilment of future and distant hopes, but hopes built upon express Divine promises, by which the elder servants of God were so often distinguished.

3. But let us turn from these great doctrines to those upon which they are founded, the doctrines of *mediation and atonement*, the ground of the Christian's hope, whether of grace here or glory hereafter.

These, it has been already observed, have a closer connection with the Mosaic Law, one of whose leading and distinctive purposes it was to shadow them out in prophetic ceremonies and types. But the Christian throws upon the other books of Scripture the reflected light, as well of these instructive emblems, as of the gracious doctrines which they prefigured. Even independently of these, indeed, he sees in the Historical Scriptures

^m See Graves's Lectures, vol. ii. p. 223.

occasional intimations of the doctrines of mediation and intercession, as in the instances of Melchizedek, of Abraham interceding for Sodom, and Job for his three friends°. But the doctrine of the atonement, to those who know both the types of the Law and their antitypes in the Gospel, can scarcely fail to be especially suggested by every mention of ancient sacrifice.

I cannot but regard indeed the primitive sacrifices as direct anticipations, more exact than any which have hitherto been noticed, of Gospel doctrine. In support of this position, however, we have no need of controversy. We need pass no peremptory decision upon any of the litigated questions concerning the import, effect, or origin of these sacred rites. When we contemplate these rites, indeed, under the light of the great atonement of the Gospel, and look back upon them also through the Mosaic sacrifices, every one of them beyond a question either of divine institution, or at least adopted into the Law by Jehovah Himself, the divine origin of the primitive sacrifices appears by far the more

° Gen. xiv. xviii. 23—33. Job xlii. 7—10. Compare Exod. xxxii. 9—14. 30—35. Num. xiv. 11—20. xxi. 4—9. But in the last instance, (the history of the brasen serpent,) as also in the case of Job, it was appointed that the intercession of Moses should be accompanied by a type of the great Atonement.

probable hypothesis. After weighing the opposite improbabilities in either scale, I know not how to ascribe to unassisted human thought the original invention of a sacred rite of such extraordinary significance, and connected afterwards under Noah and under Moses most clearly and indisputably by the Holy Spirit Himself, with the great fundamental verity of the Christian faith. But be this as it may, we need assume nothing here beyond the naked and acknowledged fact of its existence; and in the same manner, as to the import and effect of the primitive sacrifices; for what guilt did they atone? and were they expiatory? Here I would take the lowest ground. Upon a strict comparison of the words of Moses and of St. Paul it will appear, I think, that the only sacrifice properly expiatory of moral guilt was that upon the cross; that such of the Mosaic sacrifices as were apparently expiatory had reference only, (with but few and slight exceptions, intended perhaps to make the inefficacy of the rest so much the more obvious,) had reference to ceremonial offences; whilst those, on the other hand, which did refer to moral guilt, as the sacrifices on the great day of atonement, were not expiatory; did not procure remission, but only so far put away sin, as to hallow the sinner's worship, and permit him to approach the presence of the Holy God, and not

die^p. I must assume these conclusions for the present; although upon these in good measure will be founded whatever conclusions we may form respecting the primitive sacrifices. But, as was said, they need not affect our immediate purpose. Let it be true, as I apprehend it to be, that the primitive worshipper, when he offered the blood of an innocent victim, did indeed make atonement for *moral* guilt; but yet that his sacrifice was *not expiatory*; that it was a very marked confession of his guilt, and acknowledgment of the sentence it deserved, but procured no further remission than a mere temporary and outward reconciliation of the offender, just sufficient to hallow his service, and make it acceptable. Let nothing more than this be true of them; yet thus we discover in the primitive sacrifices a wonderful anticipation of the Gospel: an anticipation intelligible in some degree, however slight and faint, according to the measure of his faith and knowledge even to the patriarchal worshipper, but always and obviously intelligible to the Christian. A few and simple notes suffice to recal the whole melody, when we are accustomed to the air. And this is one of the gracious methods by which the

^p See Appendix. Discourse on the Extent and Efficacy of the Mosaic atonements.

prophetic wisdom of the Holy Spirit hath made the whole volume of the ancient Scriptures “profitable” not only “for reproof and correction,” but also “for doctrine, and instruction in righteousness ^q.”

II. So much may suffice concerning the fact, that ~~there~~ exist in the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament intimations and anticipations of the Gospel, and this even with respect to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, the doctrines of mediation, and atonement, sanctification, and eternal life. It is true, the Historical books are not always or commonly the principal depositories of these anticipations; the Law and the Prophets frequently outshine them in these respects. And true it is that we must tread this path with caution; neither overrating the spiritual advantages of the old fathers, nor losing sight of the distinctive privileges of the disciples of Christ. “Prophets, and kings, and righteous men, desired to see those things which we see, but did not see them’.” Yet there *are* anticipations and suggestions of evangelical truth interspersed even throughout the old Historical Scriptures. Sometimes the glow of Christian truth

^q 2 Tim. iii. 16.

^r Matt. xiii. 17. Luke x. 24. 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

lights up the whole landscape, and gives a form and distinctness to objects that had otherwise remained obscure; and sometimes a bright ray strikes upon the tower or the spire pointing to heaven, whilst every thing around it is dark and shrouded.

And with the bare mention of the fact its principal *uses* also, both to the Christian, and to the servants of God before the advent of Christ, will no doubt have already suggested themselves.

1. Thus, with reference *to the Patriarch and the Jew*, these anticipations of Gospel-truth had a two-fold purpose, immediate, and prospective; prospective, in the gradual preparation of the world for Christianity; immediate, in the infusion of Christian feelings, sentiments, and hopes into the bosoms of the faithful even from the earliest times. The actual knowledge possessed by the old fathers it may be extremely difficult for us to ascertain. For this is rather a question of curiosity, which it was not designed that we should resolve. But it is a very important and cheering truth, that those, to whom the means for exact knowledge are not vouchsafed, may yet, amidst very partial and imperfect knowledge of religious doctrine, entertain very good and just religious sentiments. Such were the sentiments of Abraham, when at the successive resting-places in his pilgrimage “he builded

an altar unto the Lord, and called on the name of the Lord^s.” And such, no doubt, were the sentiments of many a primitive worshipper, when he laid his hand, and confessed his guilt, upon the head of the innocent victim. It was one of the primary purposes of the long train of prophecies concerning the Messiah recorded in the Historical books, to excite sentiments of piety and hopes of grace. In a word, many a rite, ordinance, and promise in the earliest periods imparted feelings of this kind, if nothing more. But sometimes they imparted even more; from time to time an angel descended, troubled the sleeping waters, and gave them a new and salutary virtue.

All these anticipations, meanwhile, of whatever character, bore their proper part in that great purpose, which runs through the whole course of the Old Scriptures, the preparation of the world for Christianity; and further, to the Jew in particular some of them were designed to be serviceable in a very peculiar manner, by correcting his erroneous conceptions of the Law.

Never was there an instrument contrived with such admirable adaptation to its purpose as the Mosaic Law for introducing the Gospel: but too many of its disciples, we know, having “indeed a zeal of

* Gen. xii. 7, 8. xiii. 18.

God, but not according to knowledge^t,” fell into the common error of weak and ignorant men, mistaking the means for the end, the shadow for the substance. And the correction of their error is one of the remarkable purposes to which the preaching of the Gospel before the Law is applied by St. Paul himself. If the Jew overrated the priesthood of Aaron, and thence opposed the great High Priest of the Gospel, the Apostle proves from the words of David and the history of Melchizedek, that Christ is a Priest for ever after a higher order, superior to Aaron, to Levi, and to Abraham^u. Or if the Jew would fain contract the universal mercies of God, or build his righteousness upon an unstable foundation, the Apostle refers him as in the text to the covenant of faith, the religion of all mankind, preached to Abraham long before the Law. And such was the clearness of this anticipation of the Gospel, that the Apostle could appeal to it with confidence, could argue from it with effect, and demonstrate to the satisfaction of candid minds that the covenant of works was only engrafted for temporary purposes upon the earlier covenant of grace; that the original inheritance was by promise, and upon the acknowledged principles of equity the later covenant could not disannul the former, or make the promise of none effect; but that we are all the children of God by faith in

^t Rom. x. 2, &c.

^u Heb. vii.

Christ Jesus, and thus are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise^x.

2. With respect *to the Christian*, again, the uses of these anticipations of Gospel-truth are equally obvious, and perhaps even more important. Their general effect is, in a word, to throw a colouring of Christian doctrine over the records of the earlier dispensations. Not of course that the Historical Scriptures can vie in this respect with some of the other portions of the Old Testament. Hence, for example, the title by which Isaiah is commonly distinguished, as the Evangelical Prophet ; and by the resemblance of the type to the antitype, many of the Psalms, even when they appear to be occupied only with the fortunes and sufferings of David, have been wonderfully adapted to the purposes of Christian devotion. All that we are concerned to observe is the usefulness to the Christian student of such disclosures or suggestions of evangelical doctrine, as are actually to be found in the Old Historical Scriptures. And to the Christian, their use, as well as their number, is more extensive than to the Jew^y. Not to

^x Gal. iii. 8, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 24—29. Rom. iv.

^y It is obvious, that the suggestions of Christian doctrine must be much more numerous to us than to those who first received the old Scriptures. Even of actual types, there were some which did not impart Christian feelings, much less Christian know-

mention, that in whatever degree they tended to prepare the Jew to receive and propagate the Gospel, in the same degree are we beholden to them for Christianity itself ; but over and above this, the slightest suggestion of Gospel truth, which the disciple of the Law could neither appreciate nor apprehend, is intelligible and useful to the Christian. St. Paul himself has taught us this lesson. The eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews is a comment

ledge. If the paschal lamb and the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, although they suggested no thought of a crucified Redeemer, called into exercise the faith and the gratitude of the Israelite, the abstinence from blood as prescribed to Noah, before it was declared that the blood was " given to make atonement for the soul," (cf. Gen. ix. 4. Lev. xvii. 11.) could scarcely appear significant of the Christian sacrifice ; and the sign of the prophet Jonah was altogether without import as a prophetic sign, until our Saviour Himself connected it with His burial and resurrection. But there are other circumstances besides actual types in which the Christian reader cannot but trace an analogy with his own faith. Thus he cannot read the confession of the Israelite, accompanying his offering of first fruits, (Deut. xxvi.) without adverting to a spiritual redemption and " the gift of God, eternal life." Nay even, knowing what we know, it is difficult for us to avoid tracing out other hidden meanings and fanciful analogies, such as the inferiority of the Law to the Gospel, in the conquest of Canaan being entrusted not to Moses but to Joshua. (Deut. iii. See Par. Lost, xii. 307—314.) And perhaps even these need not be condemned, provided always it be recollected, that they are but fanciful, and must never be advanced as evidences, nor be dwelt upon to the exclusion of the original and literal sense.

upon it. And hence we learn to derive Christian instruction from the history of the Patriarchs, when they “wandered as strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, desiring a better country, that is, an heavenly;” or of Moses, when he “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward².” Whilst, as to the more direct disclosures, predictions, and anticipations properly so called, of the Gospel, these it is plain not only impart a Christian colouring to the early histories, but teach us also, in language the most forcible and impressive, the vast importance of those doctrines, which have thus in some sense, from the very period of the fall, formed the groundwork of the religion of fallen man. Such, for instance, is the striking testimony rendered by the history of the primitive, as well as the Mosaic, sacrifices, to the importance of the great fundamental Christian verity, atonement through the blood of the Redeemer. The same truth holds of all the ancient types, and typical persons and circumstances; such as the abstinence from blood prescribed to Noah, the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, or the histories of Melchizedek, Moses, and David, bearing upon the several offices of the Messiah as Priest, Prophet, and King. And more obviously still it holds of the whole train of succes-

² Heb. xi. 13—16. 24—28.

sive predictions concerning Christ and His Gospel, vouchsafed from time to time from the very sentence after the fall, at once to excite and cheer, inform and expand the hopes of the faithful under the earlier dispensations, and to demonstrate to us the transcendent importance of the last and highest. And thus through the great mercy of our God, and the gracious inspiration of His Holy Spirit, have the earliest Scriptures, been fitted for our learning, and adapted to make us “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus^a.”

III. Let it not be forgotten, however, that the view which we have thus endeavoured to take of the existence and the uses of certain anticipations of the Gospel interspersed throughout the Old Historical Scriptures, is superadded to that of their own great leading purposes. They discharge several important offices properly their own, and distinct from their connexion with the actual doctrines of the Gospel. And their value will not be justly appreciated, unless their leading objects are borne in mind.

Some of these great purposes, which I have already endeavoured to treat at large, I may be permitted in conclusion to recapitulate briefly, in

^a 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

order that we may see at a glance in some slight measure the worth of the treasures with whose use we are entrusted.

1. For the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament are in the first place in the strictest sense of the term RELIGIOUS HISTORIES ; far very far removed in substance and in design from those ordinary civil histories with which they have sometimes unhappily been confounded, and occupied altogether with a wonderful display of the moral nature of man, and the will and attributes of our Maker. And this view of their general character obviates at once some of the common misconceptions of their design, and points out their proper use.

But in particular, among their principal and most important purposes, we considered the part they bear in proving by a slow and gradual but most efficient process of demonstration THE WEAKNESS AND THE SINFULNESS OF FALLEN MAN, and consequently his NEED OF ATONEMENT AND OF SANCTIFICATION. And hence also some of the common offences entertained against various portions of the old sacred history are effectually removed. Yet it deserved a separate and distinct consideration, that the self-same histories, widely as their character in this very respect is often misconceived, are con-

tinually, even throughout the whole painful course of testimony which they are accumulating in proof of human depravity, are incessantly occupied in setting forth the DIVINE MERCY, AND CONDESCENSION, AND LOVING-KINDNESS. And yet, again, without invading the proper province of any other portion of holy writ, (for all the various portions of the sacred Scriptures have their proper purposes and separate uses,) we found the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament constantly employed in a religious work of the highest practical importance ; in attesting, namely, the FAITHFULNESS OF GOD, in each of its great departments, His PROVIDENCE, and His PROMISES.

Each of these purposes is distinct from the rest ; and all may with advantage be regarded separately, on the one hand, from those ANTICIPATIONS OF THE GOSPEL which have formed the subject of the present Discourse, and, on the other, from that infinite variety of uses in detail which are to be derived from particular texts and passages in the sacred histories.

2. And the great advantage of taking comprehensive views of the general character and leading purposes of the Old Testament histories is twofold.

There has been reason to apprehend for several years, and recent appearances have scarcely tended

to diminish our apprehensions, that the infection which has long wasted the theology of other countries may ere long invade our own. The authenticity and the inspiration of the Old Testament will be exposed to the assaults more or less direct of a sceptical philosophy, or a cold irreligious spirit of critical research. Many portions of the Historical Scriptures, perhaps, will be especially the objects of attack. And next to those impregnable bulwarks of sound learning and solid argument which, as occasions may require, will assuredly be raised by the sons of the Church of England in defence of the sacred Scriptures, next to these, and although vastly inferior to them in dignity and strength, yet scarcely second to them perhaps in extent of usefulness, will be those comprehensive views of the leading objects and character and uses of the several portions of holy writ, which fill the candid mind with a deep and practical conviction of its transcendent value and authority. For the purpose of practical conviction, the *internal* evidence of truth excels every other. It has been one of the objects of these Discourses, accordingly, to invite attention to views of this description concerning the Historical Scriptures of the Old Testament. Those who will be at the pains to prosecute inquiries of this kind will not indeed be indisposed to just criticism and rational research, but, under grace, they will be

transported to an eminence above the reach of petty cavils, difficulties, and doubts, and secure from the assaults of scepticism or infidelity.

But, lastly, should the danger to which I have adverted die away, there is another which ever has been, and ever will be, near at hand to every member of every Church. What was the very earliest consequence of the fall of man? Was it not that our first parents, when they heard the voice of the Lord God, sought to hide themselves from Him? It is the same with their posterity at this very day. We are abundantly alert and active indeed in the distribution of the sacred Scriptures. We are most anxious, and laudably anxious, that our Romanist brethren should acknowledge their value, and that no Christian child should be denied access to any portion of them. But do we read them ourselves? Our younger brethren, who resort to these abodes of learning, having enjoyed, as it might reasonably be imagined at least, every privilege and advantage of the highest value even from their baptism, Christian parents, instruction, education, with the aid of the ablest and most accomplished teachers, and for the most part ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—yet the youth so circumstanced, after the highest advantages apparently in the best-instructed class of the members of this Protestant Church of England, with what knowledge do they often come

hither I will not say of the Old Scriptures, but even of the New? But they will be disposed to ascribe some portion of the sin and the shame to their parents and instructors. But, let me ask again, how is it *here*? Here, where their attention is indisputably directed, and often with no little care and pains and the most valuable assistance, to the study of the Scriptures, do they make them, not in a cursory manner only in the services of the chapel, but at home in their chambers, their regular and daily study—their devout study, not in order to the mere acquisition of knowledge, but for the direct purpose of edification, as the very word of God Himself, and His own gracious gift to His unworthy creatures? Do they do so?—Do we do so ourselves? Even we ourselves, whose faith is confirmed, whose Christian principles are matured, who most unfeignedly believe in the value and importance and authority of the whole word of God? There is an indisposition in the heart of man, even in the regenerate and renewed Christian mind, to communion with our God. And may He grant, through the aid of His Holy Spirit, and the gracious intercession of His Son, that even the feeblest effort to display the use and the majesty and the harmony of the Scriptures, may tend at once to guide and recommend the study of them—may tend to awaken our slumbering diligence, to kindle our zeal and our

gratitude, to inflame our love for His holy word, and induce us to seek with a more constant and persevering earnestness that “wisdom unto salvation,” which it is its very province to impart to us “through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning ; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

ON THE EXTENT AND EFFICACY OF THE MOSAIC SACRIFICIAL ATONEMENTS.

[See note, page 63 ; and Discourse VI. page 150—153.]

Heb. ix. 13, 14.

If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying the flesh : how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ?

AMONG several important questions, to which these words invite our attention, one of considerable interest and difficulty is the **NEGATIVE** character of the **MOSAIC SACRIFICIAL ATONEMENTS**, or the nature of their inferiority to the Christian atonement.

For the doctrine of the atonement by Jesus Christ, or the reconciliation of a fallen and a sinful world to their offended Maker by the sacrifice of the Saviour upon the cross, is almost universally admitted to be the great foundation of the Gospel. Upon the atonement effected by our Redeemer are founded equally all the present privileges of Christ's elect people, and all their hopes of future glory.

And those who reject this great doctrine are raised to an unhappy importance neither by their numbers nor their arguments, but by the magnitude of their error.

And it is as universally admitted among Christians, that the Mosaic sacrifices have an immediate connection with the Christian atonement. There is no dispute concerning the origin of these, as of the earlier sacrifices before the Law. It is agreed that the sacrifices under the Law were all of them either originally appointed by it, or adopted into it by the express command of the Almighty. Of some of them moreover the prospective and typical use is unequivocally admitted; and of the general system of the Mosaic sacrifices it is confessed, that they were designed to convey most important instruction, both to the Jew and to the Christian—to the Christian, strengthening the evidence of the great doctrine of the Gospel, and illustrating its meaning, and enforcing its importance; and preparing the Jew for his great office in the reception and propagation of Christianity, both by the positive and the negative teaching of the typical system, both by what his sacrifices did, and by what they could *not* effect.

And further, as to the positive instruction thus afforded to the Jew, there is little dispute among Christians. It is at least sufficiently agreed, that the Mosaic sacrifices tended in various ways to excite and to foster many of those religious impressions which are the most appropriate to beings fallen and redeemed: the sense of guilt, and the hope of pardon; the prospect of a mysterious road to reconciliation and favour through mediation, intercession, and vicarious suffering; the unworthiness and vileness of man, the holiness and justice, yet the mercy and placability, of his Maker.

But with respect to the negative instruction conveyed by

the same typical system, the agreement is not so complete. All allow indeed that there was some great inferiority in the Mosaic Sacrifices ; the shadow must needs be inferior to the substance ; the type below its antitype. And it is plain, that when St. Paul would instruct the Hebrews in the superior glory of the Gospel above the Law, he builds greatly upon some acknowledged inferiority in the legal sacrifices. But it is not so clear in what that inferiority consisted. In the following Discourse, therefore, I shall offer some considerations upon this question ; endeavouring to inquire into the nature and extent of the MOSAIC ATONEMENTS, and to discover the principle of their INFERIORITY TO THE GREAT ATONEMENT OF THE GOSPEL ; or at least the principle of their inferiority in some of the more remarkable cases, and especially in those to which the text more expressly refers.

I. And with this view it is better that we should even dismiss from our minds all consideration both of the various subordinate distinctions between the several Mosaic sacrifices, and of the many collateral uses to which they were applied. Almost every act of public worship under the Law either consisted in offerings and sacrifices, or was accompanied by them : but we are not at present concerned with them as employed in hallowing a vow, or in ratifying the covenant, or in the praise or adoration of the Creator, in celebrating the mercies of His general Providence, or acknowledging and commemorating His special mercies to His chosen and redeemed people—but only as intended to express a sense of uncleanness or guilt, self-abbhorrence and repentance, the need of purification and par-

don, the desire of atonement, that is to say, of reconciliation, acceptance, or forgiveness of sins, whether those of individuals, or of families, or of the whole congregation of Israel. Still less need we attend to the names of sacrifices derived from the ceremonial, or from the substance, of the offering (as meat and drink offerings, heave and wave offerings); nor to any other sacrifices but those in which *blood was shed*, and which are usually distinguished into four classes, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, sin and trespass offerings. And even with these we are concerned only so far as the blood of the victim was designed to make *atonement* for the life of him who offered it, according to the gracious but mysterious grant of the Almighty to the people of Israel, “the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul ^a.”

What then were the extent and the efficacy of this atonement?

1. Two answers are commonly returned to this question; both of them attributing, but upon different principles, an inferiority to the Mosaic atonement below the Christian.

For some contend, that, with the exception of a few slighter cases of moral offences particularly exempted from the general rule, the Mosaic atonements did not in fact extend to *moral* offences at all, but were limited to transgressions of the ritual or ceremonial Law. Others, on the contrary, conceive, that the forgiveness of all offences, moral as well as ceremonial, was obtained through the

^a Lev. xvii. 11.

medium of the legal sacrifices ; yet remission only for a *limited period*, and not of course through any *inherent* virtue in these offerings of bulls and of goats, but through the anticipated and imputed efficacy of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, who was subsequently to be offered upon the cross, but was always understood as “ the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ^b.”

^b The popular notions on the subject are well expressed by Milton,

—therefore was Law giv'n them to evince
 Their natural pravity, by stirring up
 Sin against law to fight : that when they see
Law can discover sin, but not remove,
Save by those shadowy expiations weak,
The blood of bulls and goats, they may conclude
 Some blood more precious must be paid for man,
 Just for unjust, that in such righteousness
 To them by faith imputed, they may find
 Justification towards God, and *peace of*
Conscience, which the law by ceremonies
Cannot appease, nor man the moral part
 Perform, and not performing cannot live.
 So law appears imperfect, and but giv'n
 With purpose to resign them in full time
 Up to a better covenant, disciplin'd
 From shadowy types to truth, &c.

Par. Lost, xii. 287, et seq.

But this description of the imperfection of the Law, just and scriptural as it is in the main with respect both to justification and atonement, does not attempt to explain in what the weakness of those shadowy expiations consisted ; or whether they could in any sense remove that moral guilt, which it was the office of the Law to discover ; or whether there was any other class of offences, which the Law not so much discovered as occasioned, and the guilt of which its own expiations could altogether remove. In the text on the other hand I have endeavoured to express the leading opinions of those who have sought to analyse with greater precision the weakness of the Mosaic atonements.

2. But neither of these opinions seems altogether satisfactory. The former indeed appears at variance with the very letter of the old Scriptures; and the latter with the spirit if not the letter of the New Testament.

Take the language of the book of Leviticus concerning the services of the great day of atonement; Aaron “shall make an atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of *their transgressions in all their sins*.” This is spoken of the blood of one of the two goats which were to be taken on that day for a sin-offering for the congregation; while of the other, the scape-goat, which is usually considered a part of the same offering^c, it is written, “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him *all the iniquities* of the children of Israel, and *all their transgressions in all their sins*, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him *all their iniquities*”^d. It does not appear easy to imagine language which would more naturally include moral as well as ceremonial offences within the range of this atonement.

Yet are we on the other hand to suppose that *forgiveness* of all offences, moral as well as ceremonial, was really obtained through the medium of these or any other of the

^c See Lev. xiv. 49—53. And Abp. Magee on Atonement and Sacrifice, No. 73.

^d Lev. xvi. 5, 15, 16, 21, 22. And the words in the original, and in the LXX are equally strong. See Abp. Magee on Atonement, No. 37. I refer particularly to the Septuagint Version, because on the whole of this question it is peculiarly useful to compare the language of the LXX with that of St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

legal sacrifices, when we hear the Apostle declaring not merely that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins^e,”—for this might be interpreted in consistency with that imputed efficacy, which is supposed to have been allowed to these typical offerings by a gracious anticipation of the Christian Sacrifice—but both expressly and by implication asserting, that these typical sacrifices did not in point of fact purge the conscience? Thus having said that in the first tabernacle “were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience,” he argues upon this their inefficacy as a fact in the words of the text, limiting the purifying effect of the type to the flesh, and extending that of the antitype even to the conscience; “for if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your *conscience* from dead works to serve the living God^f?”

3. But perhaps if we attend to the words *purification* and *sanctification*, which the Apostle here employs, and distinguish them from complete *expiation*, or the *actual forgiveness* of sins, we shall find a clew which will go far to lead us through the perplexities of this question.

For it was a leading and very important purpose of the Law to impress upon the Israelites the conviction of their being unholy, and unclean, as well as sinful, and therefore every way unfit of themselves to approach the awful

^e Heb. x. 4.

^f Heb. ix. 9, 13, 14, x. 1, &c.

presence of the pure and holy God. The dull and sensual mind which could scarcely apprehend the spiritual pollution of the soul had its conceptions assisted by the sight and thought of the pollutions of the body. Unclean-ness was coupled with sin, and sin with uncleanness. And in either case, before any unclean thing or sinful person could be *sanctified* or made holy, admitted to worship God, or consecrated to His service, they must needs undergo a previous *purification* from the uncleanness or the sin.

Thus the bodily disorder, the issue or the leprosy, which produced an actual uncleanness, meeting the senses and offending them, was regarded as having the very nature of actual sin, of which it was often the punishment, and of whose foulness and deformity it afforded an apt representation. Then again, certain imaginary pollutions, from the touch of a dead body, for example, or of the persons of those who laboured under an actual uncleanness, or of the victim to which certain other uncleannesses were supposed to be transferred, were brought under the same condition, and treated as actual pollutions, and thence as sinful. The dullest mind could easily pass from the sight of the actual, to the thought of the imaginary, pollution. And to keep alive this thought, and bring it into continual use, things without life were treated as liable to the same pollutions; and the furniture, and garments, and houses of the Israelites, and even the altars and the tabernacle, might be regarded as unclean.

And as uncleannesses, both actual and imaginary or conventional, were thus ranked with sins, so were sins treated as the foulest kinds of uncleanness. But then, again, from the very nature of a ritual law, which for various important purposes had been given to Israel, it followed of

course, that under the general head of iniquity, transgression, and sin, would be classed not only moral offences, or violations of the natural laws of God, but ceremonial offences also, or transgressions of any of the precepts of God's positive law. Hence indeed in some cases the sinfulness of some of those imaginary pollutions, which have just been mentioned; that is to say, whenever the pollution was not absolutely involuntary or unavoidable, and yet known to be forbidden. But hence in all cases, to omit a rite commanded, or to do a thing prohibited, or to do incorrectly what had been appointed exactly, became of necessity a transgression and a sin.

II. When these things are borne in mind, a considerable portion of the obscurity which hangs over the nature and extent of the Mosaic Atonements will perhaps be cleared away. For,

1. In the first place, there are undoubtedly several sacrifices, under the denomination of sin and trespass offerings, whose effect was atonement and expiation the most complete; including, that is to say, the *forgiveness* of the sins for which these sacrifices were offered. They were appointed for several occasions, and for many persons, for the priests, the rulers, private individuals, and the whole congregation^g; and the usual close of the directions relating to them is the promise of the forgiveness of these persons' sin, conveyed in these terms, or terms as express as these, "and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and *it shall be forgiven them.*"

^g Lev. iv. v. vi. xix. Num. xv.

But from the very terms in which the appointment of these sacrifices is conceived, and the minuteness of the directions concerning them, it might be suspected that they were not, like the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, familiar to the people long before, and indeed common to them with other people^h, but were new appointments of the Mosaic Law. And with good reason ; because, with some exceptions hereafter to be noticed, they do not appear (judging even by the terms of the Law itself, and without the assistance of St. Paul's commentary upon it) to have procured the forgiveness of moral offences at all, but of those *ceremonial offences* which were become sins only by the Law.

A wilful and obstinate, indeed, or *presumptuous* transgression even of a ritual law, appointed by competent authority, becomes an act of moral disobedience ; and for presumptuous sins accordingly these sacrifices were not appointed ; but chiefly for sins of ignoranceⁱ. “ The priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, and it shall be forgiven him ; but the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord ; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people ; his iniquity

^h See Gen. viii. xxii. Exod. x. xviii. Num. xxiii. Job. i. xlii. the sacrifices of Noah, Abraham, Jethro, Balaam, Job, &c., shewing a familiarity with the burnt-offering ; and indeed with the peace-offering ; for in Exod. x. 25. xviii. 12. the word rendered “ sacrifices,” זבחים, means “ peace-offerings.” See Outram de Sacrificiis, lib. i. cap. x. §. 1.

ⁱ Not sins of infirmity, I apprehend, but rather, according to the authorized translation, sins of ignorance. See Abp. Magee on Atonement, No. 37. Cf. Levit. iv.

shall be upon him^k." Moral offences, indeed, can seldom be committed by ignorance; since the moral law is written on the tables of the heart, as well as the tables of stone. But offences against a ritual law, new, minute, and complicated, must, it is obvious, continually occur on the part of priests, and people, rulers, and private men, if not from unavoidable ignorance, yet still without any thing of wilful or presumptuous disrespect to the law-giver. And it seems reasonable and just, that the same law which constituted an offence of this description, should devise means, which might procure the forgiveness of the offender, whilst they evinced his desire of pardon, and his readiness to obey the law.

2. But, secondly, another and a distinct purpose of many of the Mosaic rites was to obtain not the forgiveness of sin, but *purification*; whether purification from uncleanness regarded as sin, or from sin regarded as uncleanness.

The Apostle alludes to one remarkable rite of this kind in those words of the text, "the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean." In the minute directions for the use of the water of separation, as it was called, consecrated by the ashes of this heifer, the particular kind of uncleanness more especially mentioned as designed to be removed by it is the pollution contracted by touching the dead. It was uncleanness only through appointment, and sin only through the law; and yet this water of separation is termed "a purification for sin," or otherwise the ashes of the heifer are called "the ashes of the burnt sin-offering,"

^k Cf. Num. xv. 27—31. Lev. iv. 2, 3, 13, &c.

which for my present purpose gives the same sense¹. Still further to mark the religious and typical design of the legal purifications, the very instrument appointed in most cases was the last which could in any natural way effect purification at all : for “almost all things,” as the Apostle remarks, “are by the law purged with *blood*^m.” And in all instances, the further object of this purification was declared to be *sanctification* ; not of course sanctification in the usual sense of the word in the New Testament, but such sanctification as entitled the Israelite, without exposing himself to the penalty of death for his presumption, to approach the worship and the sanctuary of the pure and holy God. “The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself,” said the Law, “that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.” “I am the Lord your God : ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy ; for I am holyⁿ.”

It is needless to multiply instances in a matter so well known. But there is one of the most remarkable of the Mosaic institutions, which peculiarly demands our attention ; not only because it is alluded to by the Apostle in the text, and indeed throughout his whole discussion of the Mosaic sacrifices, but also because an erroneous conception of the extent of the legal atonements is often derived probably from this very institution. For the ceremonies of the *great day of atonement* are usually supposed to have complete expiation or the actual remission of sins in view,

¹ See Abp. Magee on Atonement, No. 37.

^m Heb. ix. 22.

ⁿ Num. xix. 13, 20, &c. Lev. xi. 44. xii. 4. xiv. 14, 25, 52, &c.

whereas they do not seem to extend beyond *purification* in order to *sanctification*. The very occasion of this institution suggests this view of its design, and the record of its appointment, independently of the Apostle's commentary, seems to establish it^o.

The occasion selected for introducing the ceremonies of the great day of atonement was the awful punishment of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, for presuming to offer strange fire upon the altar, and not heeding the declaration of the Lord, that "he would be sanctified in them that came nigh him^p." But the appointments, whose primary object was thus to preserve the priest from death in the most sacred ministrations of the sanctuary, were extended to sacrificial atonements for all the priests, and for the whole people, and even for the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and the altar^q; atonements all of them evidently designed for a similar end, to cleanse, namely, to hallow, and sanctify them for the service of the Lord. It might be expected, that in the annual solemnities for this end some notice would be taken not of legal impurities or ceremonial offences alone, but much more of those sins against the moral law, which would render the worshipper far more unclean in the sight of Him "who is of purer eyes than to behold evil^r." And accordingly, as was observed before, the very words employed in the account of this institution, "all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins," scarcely admit of a more restricted interpretation. But then it is to be observed

^o Lev. xvi. xxiii. Num. xxix.

^p Lev. x. 1—3. xvi. 1, 2. 13.

^q See Ezek. xliii. 18—27. (particularly 22, 23, 26, 27.) xlv. 15, 17—20. cf. xliv. 19, and xlv. 20.

^r Hab. i. 13.

further, that there is not one word, throughout the whole account, of the *actual forgiveness* of these sins. And this is the more remarkable, because in every case of the sin and trespass offerings already noticed, the forgiveness of the sin is the expressed end of the atonements. But the sacrifices of the great day of atonement, with a wider range in the objects of the atonements, were more limited in their effects. They covered all sins, but did not procure their actual remission. The sins of the Israelites were here regarded as *uncleannesses*, which disqualified them and every thing of theirs for the service of the Lord. Therefore it is said, “atonement (or reconciliation) was to be made for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins; and for the tabernacle of the congregation that remained among them in the midst of their uncleanness^s.” And so again, “atonement was to be made for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year; to cleanse them, that they might be clean from all their sins before the Lord^t.” This was then their *purification in order to their sanctification*^v. They were so far cleansed and hallowed, that they might worship the Lord and not die. Their iniquities were removed as it were far off upon the head of the emissary-goat which bore them away; but there was here no promise, as in those other cases of sin-offering, of the actual remission of their guilt.

^s Lev. xvi. 16, 20, &c.

^t Verse 30, 34.

^v Resembling, as it has been well observed, the *absolution* pronounced by the Christian church, which entitles the absolved person to Christian communion, but does not necessarily ensure to him pardon from God.

3. According to this account, then, of the extent and the efficacy of the legal atonements, we shall not ascribe their acknowledged inferiority to the Christian atonement solely to their limited extent, as if the occasions of these atonements were contracted almost entirely within the bounds of ceremonial offences; neither shall we consider their efficacy, when they expiated moral guilt, as corresponding indeed in immediate effect with that of the Christian atonement, but as inferior to it, because the duration of that effect was limited, and their virtue was not inherent but always derived from another source, the anticipated virtue namely of the Christian atonement; but we shall steer between both these opinions:—and the general rule will be, that when the legal atonements extended to *moral* as well as ceremonial offences, they so far effected the reconciliation of the offender, that they gave him admission with impunity to the congregation, and the worship of God; but where they were restricted to *ceremonial* offences, which were sins only by the Law, then by the same law they procured for all but the presumptuous offender the actual forgiveness of the sin.

The exceptions to this rule will be found in a few of the trespass-offerings which obtained the forgiveness of certain specified cases even of moral guilt. And some explanations have been proposed of this apparent anomaly^u. But without attempting to examine the solutions of the difficulty, we may be content to leave the matter at present as a difficulty; yet as a difficulty of minor importance, compared with the simplicity of the general rule. It is

^u See Lev. vi. 1—7. xix. 20—22. for the particular cases alluded to. See also Davison on Primitive Sacrifice, p. 90—92.

in theology indeed as in natural history; the infinite varieties of nature refuse to conform precisely to the classifications of the natural historian; and the systems of divines in like manner will not always exactly fit the different dispensations of God, which, however strongly contrasted in some of their leading distinctions, yet in other respects are blended together and shaded off into one another.

As an exception moreover of minor importance, it is conceivable that St. Paul might have disregarded this anomaly, while his comment upon the Law harmonizes exactly with the preceding account of the general rule.

The traditions of the Jews also seem to shew traces of the distinction above noticed; whilst the opinions of the modern Jews are for obvious reasons not entitled to much consideration. St. Paul indeed, even if uninspired, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, even if not St. Paul's, would be better evidence of the sentiments of the reflecting Jews themselves on the weakness of their Law in an age when sacrifices had not yet ceased, than the writings of the later Jews, ever prone to stumble on that stumbling-block, to discover perfection in the old covenant, and find equally in their Law the promise of eternal life, and the forgiveness of moral guilt *.

* That the Jewish traditions, however, discover traces of the very distinction above noticed, may appear from the forms of supplication collected from Maimonides and others by Outram. (*De Sacrificiis*, lib. i. cap. xv. §. 10, 11.) *Obsecro Domine, peccavimus, deliquimus, rebellavimus in conspectu tuo ego, et familia mea. Obsecro Domine, remitte nunc peccata, delicta, et rebelliones quibus peccavimus, deliquimus, et rebellavimus, ego, et familia mea. Sicut scriptum est in lege Mosis servi tui, ubi dictum est, in hac expiatio erit vestri, atque mundatio ab omnibus peccatis vestris, coram Domino mundabimini.* In this

But *we* hear St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews as well as in his other Epistles, as an inspired writer, and an authoritative expositor of the Law; and he not only declares in general terms “the weakness and unprofitableness” of the Law’, but explains that weakness in its rela-

form, which was that of the high priest on the great day of atonement, (and with this exactly corresponds his supplication for all the priests as well as for himself and his family,) we observe that, though remission of sins is indeed prayed for, yet the concluding reference is to the promise in Lev. xvi. 30. that they should be “clean from all their sins.” In what sense and to what extent they were to be thus cleansed, I have already attempted to explain. On the other hand, the form pronounced by the offender who offered a sin-offering for a particular offence, whilst he held his hand upon the head of the victim, was to the following effect, implying apparently an expectation of a more complete atonement. *Obsecro Domine, peccavi, deliqui, rebellavi, hoc, et illud feci, nunc autem pœnitentiam ago, sitque (hostia) hæc expiatio mea. Quæ quidem verba, ut Judæi docent, (says Outram, referring to the same authorities,) hujusmodi significationem habent, sit hostia hæc meum in locum substituta, ut quod ipse malum merui, id in hostiæ meæ caput recidat.*

With regard to the fatal extent to which the modern Jews have overlooked the weakness of their Law in the article of atonement, as in the other great peculiarities of the Gospel, let the following passage suffice, which I find cited from Maimonides de Pœnit. cap. i. §. 2. by Abp. Magee on Atonement, No. 37. “The scape-goat made atonement for all the transgressions of the law, both the lighter and the more heavy transgressions, whether done presumptuously or ignorantly: all are expiated by the scape-goat, if indeed the party repent.” Maimonides and the modern Jews in such sentiments express, it is to be feared, the clearing of “the conscience,” the *perfect* remission of all moral guilt. So thick “a veil is on their heart;” (2 Cor. iii. Rom. xi.) and until it be withdrawn, (alas! who shall say how much longer it may be retained, and how much more closely drawn around them, through *our* fault,) so utterly unfitted are they to understand that their law could give neither life nor righteousness, to seek “a better covenant established upon better promises,” (Heb. viii.) or to draw nigh unto that Saviour, by whom alone they can be “justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (Acts xiii.)

† Heb. vii. 18, 19. Rom. viii. 3. Gal. iv. 9.

tion to the legal sacrifices. For “the Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, could never by those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year^a.” Yet the imperfection upon which the Apostle dwells is not merely the imperfection of a transient remission, of a charter of remission requiring to be renewed at stated intervals^a. But rather he makes the repetition of the sacrifices an argument for their imperfection. The means employed could not accomplish that end at all. For, he continues, “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins^b.” But the Apostle had already explained in what the efficacy of these sacrifices consisted; for they had *some* efficacy; “they could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to *the conscience* ^c,” but “the blood of bulls and of goats, and the

^a Heb. x. 1—3.

^a The late Mr. Veysie proposed, that the clause in verse 1, *εἰς τὸ διηκίαις*, which our Translators have attached to *προσφέρουσιν*, “offer continually year by year,” should be rendered with *τελειῶσαι*, “make perfect for ever.” (Bampton Lect. iv. p. 102.) He was led to this criticism, probably, by comparing ver. 1. with ver. 14; had he attended to the force of *οὐδέποτε* in ver. 1, or to the point of the apostle’s language in ver. 11 and 12, he would have assented to the judgment of our Translators. But though I cannot always agree with Mr. Veysie, (nor indeed exactly with any of the eminent writers to whom I have referred upon this question,) I take the opportunity of recommending his work as one of the very best yet extant upon the doctrine of atonement.

^b Heb. x. 4.

^c ix. 9.

ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, *sanctified to the purifying of the flesh* ^c;" and this phrase will easily, I suppose, include even the complete expiation of merely ceremonial offences, which the ordinances of the same Law could both occasion and remove, but cannot surely extend beyond that merely external purification for religious purposes, already discussed, of those moral offences which overpower the conscience, a purification without remission of sins.

In one word, it is the Gospel alone which proclaims the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, through faith in a better sacrifice than the Law could appoint. In the legal offerings God took no pleasure. Therefore Christ came to do his will. "By the which will we are sanctified," continues the Apostle, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ^d." "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." And this the Holy Ghost witnessed long before of that better covenant, wherein "our sins and iniquities God would remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin ^e."

III. 1. It would be almost superfluous to dwell upon the use and design of this inherent weakness in the legal atonements to *prepare the mind of the reflecting Israelite for the reception of a better covenant*. Taught evidently by his Law, that while man was sinful and unclean, God was just and holy and required holiness, and yet was merciful, and had devised means of atonement and pardon

^c Heb. ix. 13.

^d x. 5—10.

^e x. 11—18.

through vicarious sacrifice—to what quarter nevertheless should he turn for the forgiveness of sin? For the outward purification of the flesh atonement was provided. He might thus worship God, and not die. But the atonements to which the promise of forgiveness was annexed did not extend beyond ceremonial offences, unless it were to include some very few instances of moral offences^f; the very exception itself tending to aggravate the fearful sense of guilt for those numerous and deeper offences left without promise of complete expiation; and the whole scheme calculated indeed to raise a hope, but not to satisfy it. These considerations, again, would press upon him with accumulated force, as in process of time his attention was more and more turned to the thought of a life to come, and the awful consequences of unremitted guilt hereafter. But then he would find the future Messiah, who was to come of his nature, announced under the description of “a sin-offering,” and as “one who should bear our iniquities^g.” Here then might be the very sacrifice to be desired for *all* his sins. And at length in the fulness of time the pious Jew “who looked for redemption in Jerusalem” would gladly listen to the voice of that “Prophet of the Highest, who came before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, and give knowledge of salvation unto his people *by the remission of their sins*,” and who bore witness to Jesus Christ as “the Lamb of God which *taketh away the sin of the world*.” And there were some true Israelites, we acknowledge with all thankfulness, who were thus prepared

^f Cf. Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

^g Is. liii. 10, 11.

^h Luke ii. 38, 76, 77, &c. John i. 29.

for the truth, who received, and who spread it, and handed it down even to us.

2. But let us turn our thoughts for a few moments to the light which these considerations upon the Mosaic atonements appear to throw upon the design of the earlier sacrifices before the Law, as well as upon that last great Sacrifice, of which the legal offerings were the types and shadows.

For it has been justly urged as one of the strongest objections to the theory of the divine origin of the *primitive sacrifices*, that if they procured the remission of guilt, it must be moral guilt; and they would thus have a higher efficacy than the atonements of the Law itself which succeeded to them, and which promised forgiveness of sin to few besides ceremonial offencesⁱ. But why are we to suppose that the primitive sacrifices promised forgiveness of sin at all? That they were in several cases expressly appointed by the Almighty is undeniable. The burnt-offerings and peace-offerings under the Law have the air of being merely continuations of the earlier sacrifices. And as some of these had an atoning effect^k, so might some of the primitive offerings. And yet the virtue of their atonement might not extend in either case to complete expiation, or the actual remission of guilt, but only to that external and primary reconciliation, which averted the immediate wrath of God from the offender, sanctified his worship, and made his prayers acceptable. The account which is

ⁱ See this objection strongly put by Mr. Davison, "Primitive Sacrifice," p. 84—86, 93—96.

^k Lev. i. 4.

delivered to us of the sacrifices of Job both before and after his sufferings, the most complete account we possess perhaps of the primitive offerings, appears to be in perfect harmony with this view of their design and efficacy¹. And this explanation will be consistent both with the divine origin of the primitive sacrifices, and with the gradual progress of the preparation for the Gospel. As even to Noah, we are informed, the command was given to abstain from blood, and yet the reason of the prohibition was not revealed until the age of Moses ; so the very earliest sacrifices might be of God's appointment, yet with no further revelation of their design than that they expressed guilt, averted instant wrath, and hallowed the worship of the Patriarchs ; and under the Law this efficacy would continue with the efficacy also of atonement extended further to the express forgiveness of ceremonial offences, and of some few instances even of moral guilt ; yet still the conscience was not cleared, and the proper remission of the sins of the world was reserved for the great Atonement of the Gospel.

3. And let us turn in the last place, though with the utmost brevity, to the need and the end of this *Christian Atonement*.

For it is indeed requisite that we should advert to these great subjects from time to time. Distracted with the ordinary business of life, and corrupted by the atmosphere of indifference which surrounds us, and measuring ourselves by the standard of the worldly and thoughtless, we too often forget what we are, and what has been done for us : we even plume ourselves upon the merit of our prayers and praises, when but for the atonement of Jesus Christ we were

¹ Job i. 5. xlii. 8—10.

altogether unclean and polluted in the sight of God, and utterly unworthy even to worship our offended Maker. But it was a dreadful pollution indeed which the Son of God came down to wash away. And this inference seems unavoidable. We are not warranted in inferring the divinity of the Redeemer either from the guilt of man or from the justice of God, as if they required so great a sacrifice ; because we have no antecedent knowledge of the nature of vicarious sacrifice ; we are utterly ignorant of the whole principle of it except so far as Revelation guides us. But from the revealed value of the sacrifice to infer the dreadful enormity of the guilt it expiated, assumes nothing more than that the Son of the Most High would not have taken our nature upon Him without sufficient cause.

But too frequently also the end of redemption is as little considered as the need of it. Nay, and there are cases in which we do well to turn from what we know to what we hope ; and others in which, with however little ground for hope, our knowledge suggests thoughts too awful to be pursued. We see millions of human beings still buried in pagan darkness ; millions more enthralled by the Mahometan imposture ; the remnant of the once chosen people of God mingling with Christians, yet rejecting Christianity ; we know only that none of these are members of Christ, and none therefore within the promise of eternal life. But we do well (if it be not done at least to damp our zeal, or excuse our remissness in spreading the word of life) to turn from knowledge to hope, looking onward to the conversion of the Jews, when the harvest of the Gentile world is ripe ; rejoicing that idolatry has been cut away, though by the sword of an impostor ; and contemplating the progress of a great and comprehensive scheme tending still to

the salvation of men, and the glory of God. But we look at home, perhaps, and see a reasonable being of mature age, professing Christianity, but deriding it, and desirous to doubt or disregard God's revelation and law; wasting his hours in pleasure or sin, his health in luxury, his mind in unthinking indolence, and then dropping into the grave unprepared: and the thought of his destination discovers an abyss of danger so deep and dark, that we shudder and dare not look into it. Or we behold the youthful Christian—so called at least, and so brought up, nay, and who is baptized and entitled to the privileges of a Christian, and must therefore as a Christian be tried and judged—we see such an one setting at nought his Christian privileges, mocking holiness, or boasting of his vices, enslaving himself to the grosser passions, and defiling that body which should be the temple of the Holy Spirit; and if we do not join in the heartless laugh of the world at vices which are the shame of a rational creature, and the destruction of a Christian, we yet indulge only in hopes of a reformation which may never be permitted, and do not consider the awful reality of his present dangerous condition.

But the language of Scripture is express and definite. “He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption^l.” “Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God^m.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lordⁿ.” “Fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints: for this ye know,” says the Apostle, “that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of

^l Gal. vi. 8.

^m 1 John iii. 10.

ⁿ Heb. xii. 14.

God^o.” For certainly the only end of that atonement which the sacrifice of Christ has already effected, is that we may live to Him, and worship and serve God acceptably. “ He gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works ^p.” It is in vain that we have once been sanctified by His death, if we are not still sanctified by His Holy Spirit. “ If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ^q.” To this end does “ the blood of Christ purge our conscience from dead works,” whether evil works which lead to death, or works not of Christian faith and which cannot tend to life—even that we may “ serve the living God.”

Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

^o Eph. v. 1—6. Gal. v. 19—22. ^p Tit. ii. 11—14. ^q Rom. viii. 9—14.

THE END.

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